

[illegible]

Credits



@g0atheart



@g0atheart



@bevertownartz



@bevertown_artz



@bevertown-artz



@deadpossumco



@deadpossumco



@ramszahhak



@ramsandnoodles



@ramsandnoodles



@raeraraa



@raerara

Credits



 @Phd_in_nakk

 @dabethan



 @aslanZounder

 @aslanzounder



 @Demonickitkats

 @Demonic.kitkats



 @1alchemistart

 @1alchemistart

 @1a-lchemistart



 @jules73777300

 @lifemaid

Credits



 @anxiousadvent



 @obscoreoccultist

 @obscoreoccultist



 @HeroOfHeart

 @l1ttleluciernaga

 @luciernagaart



 @utan-poluo

 @zoebysal

 @cosidoodles



 @StarlightHarper

 @dualitysdownfall

 @dualitysdownfall

Credits



 @PertDeGert



 @dispenserbox

 @dispenserbox

Haunted by the
Ghost of Character
Development Yet
to Come

 @mercurialHekate

 @mercurialHekate

Insert Breaking
Benjamin Reference

 @thinglikerbucky

 @thinglikerbucky

 @arachnidstardis

Palace of Cold
and Silence

 @AltUniverseWash

 @AltUniverseWash



SUPER CROCKER FIGHTER

CHOOSE YOUR FIGHTER



PLAYER 1

PLAYER 2



PRESS A TO START

A DEADPOSSUMCO ARCADE GAME

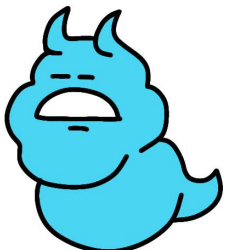






\$0 12 OCT

The Gutsy Gumzine



Cover: Saxon

the gutsy GUMSHOE

FEATURING SPIDR3!

THIS ISSUE:
ONE OF HER TOUGHEST FOES YET!
WILL GUMSHOE LOSE HER MOXIE?
OF COURSE NOT!
(but you should read it just in case!)













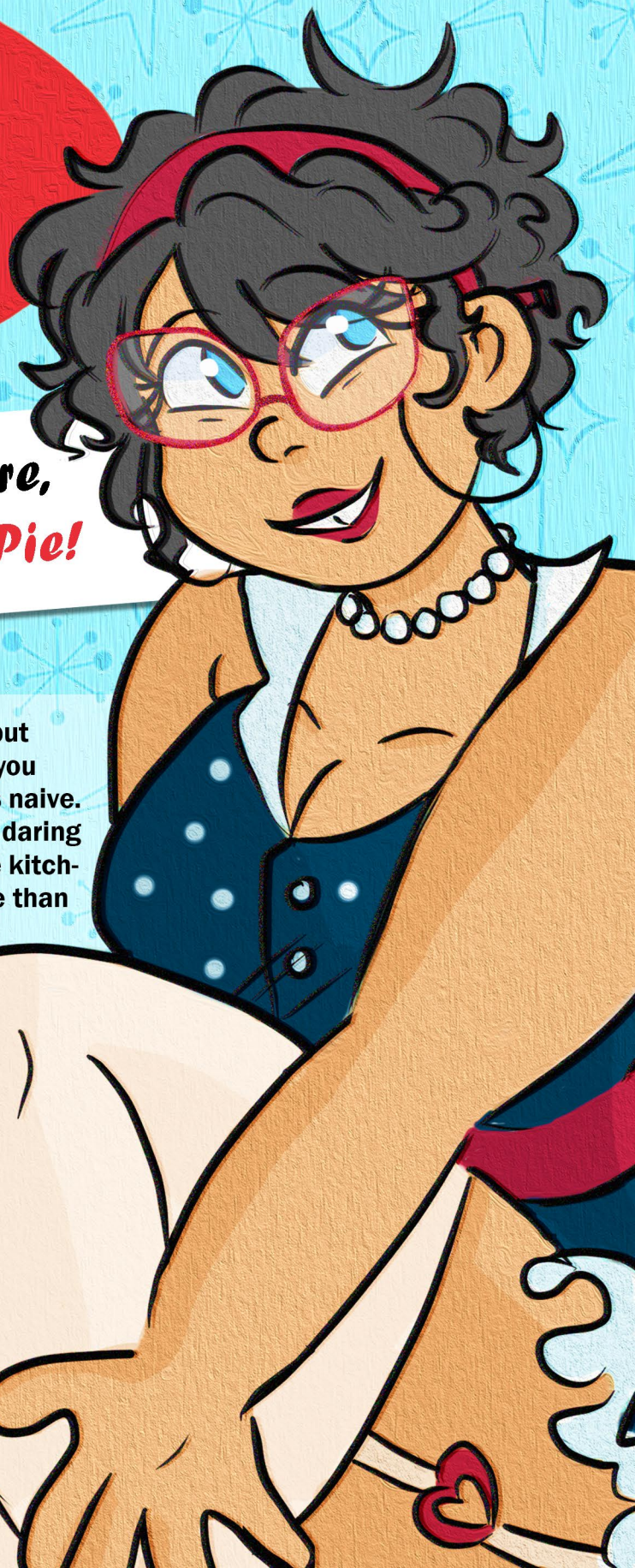


All Hail the Heiress!

A new Crocker is here,
and she is **pretty as Pie!**

Young, bright and full of ideas that rival and sometimes even outdo those of her predecessor, **Jane Crocker** is the prodigious protégé of the Betty Crocker CEO, as well as the new face of the brand--and what a face it is--! The gutsy go-getter has been hidden from the masses

since childhood, but don't let that fool you into thinking she's naive. She's a smart and daring connoisseur of the kitchen and she is more than ready to take on her role!







Jane
Crocker

IS ON THE CASE!







You mull over Jasprose's words a bit more as you stir this morning's first (but not only) cup of joe. Hangovers should never be paired with caffeine withdrawal.

...

As hard as you try, you don't think you're capable of even imagining yourself indulging in the domestic. Run something like a bakery (only a single location?), have a... spouse. You know, that sort of cute shit that can qualify as a happy ending. Now, being in charge, being "in the know," being AMBITIOUS. That's Jane Crocker.

...

Maybe you can unlearn it. D. Strider once lectured you about the concept of tabula rasa or whatever the hell it's called.

Jasprose certainly is wiping your slate clean. "A second chance for the future you really want," she had said with a wink.

She said that like she wasn't hoping the both of you would engage in gland to gland combat from the start. You weren't stupid enough to miss that one. You just didn't want to deal with it at the time. Preferably never, really.

...

However, despite their attempts at convincing you, you just don't think there's anything inherently wrong with being a leader. *Somebody* has to be. CEO of a conglomerate, president of a world government. It all sort of blends together, really. You mean, you're already God, there isn't much of a step up from here. But you should still use your deification for *something*. In any case, leadership runs in your veins, and it'd be a waste to discard your skills. Jasprose was the one to suggest using your leadership skills on a local business. Start from the ground up. Appealing as it is, being forced ("Encouraged," the damn pussycat in your head corrects) to downsize leaves you feeling... A way. Why can't you have your cake and eat it too?

...

It's harmless. You're harmless. This is for everyone's sake. Right?

...

You take a quick temperature test before chugging the rest of the mug. A pause. Maybe you should make another one? Brew a cup, get emo, chug it, brew another one, get more emo, throw this bitch back too. Ad nauseum. Actually. Ugh. Now you're getting nauseous.

...

Okay, this is getting stupid now. Seriously, what's your damage? You were fine up until some stupid fucking pixie manic dame with a tail threw you off your rhythm. You're about two seconds away from pouring Irish cream in the coffee pot before you remember she already chucked out everything that was in the cabinet. *The cabinet.*

...

FUCK. FUCK FUCK FUCK. SERIOUSLY, WHAT THE FUCK? ARE YOU SOME SPLENETIC CHILD IN NEED OF A BABYSITTER? THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS. YOU'RE A GROWN WOMAN!

...

You carefully place your mug down away from you before promptly slamming your fist against the counter. You can hear yourself yelling... something. Or nothing. It's just a howl ripped from somewhere beyond you. Feels good. Throat hurts.

...

And then it's all over like it never happened. What happened? Who knows. You're definitely lucid. You've been lucid this whole time. Good thing you're home alone.

...

The cup winds up back in your hand as you exit the kitchen. You plop down on the couch in the living room. It's still the same ugly, pudgy couch from last decade (or should you say last universe?). It has its rear-induced indents, the largest being where your dad usually sits and reads if he wants a change of scenery from his study. You take a large breath to ground yourself. Your little outburst brought whatever headache you may have had into the forefront. From temple to temple, across the expanse of oily skin that connects them, you feel it pulsating.

...

You've been having a lot of headaches recently. That's a bit odd, isn't it? You begin to ponder possible causes, but decide it's probably just *everything*. The freshly erratic schedule, the withdrawals, *Jasprosesprite*. You also think you might just get chronic headaches, but they've been especially awful in recency.

...

You nurse a good gulp on this first sip. Sitting in your old house, hiding away, waiting for everything to blow over for a

minute. Which sits on the mass grave of an entire civilization, using its remains to carve a new home. It's like the old home, but a bit to the left. Peculiar to think you could say you roamed with the dinosaurs.

...

Metaphorically speaking.

...

Another pour down the old hatch.

This is so stupid.

...

You're not doing anything. What's there to do? You were told to wait, so you're waiting, but it feels wrong.

You lightly itch your hands.

...

A third sip, much smaller comparatively than its predecessors. Nothing's happening. Well, what's there to do? You could start cleaning out the backyard, that's always something your dad swears up and down he needs to do, but he knows the both of you would prefer if you handled that. While he might have you beat in the kitchen, your thumbs were always greener.

...

Sip. Ugh. Too much work. Maybe you just need to relax. A nice break from... well, being... you? You like being you, though. Gives you something to do.

...

Oh Jesus Christ this is annoying. *Seriously, what's your damage?* It's just for today. And tomorrow. And probably the day after that. Maybe even the day after *that*? But beyond that you'll probably be good.

Probably? No, definitely...

Definitely.

...

Sip. Ah.

Oh, we're done?

Okay, so no plot, no conflict resolution in the midst, not even some direction. There was barely any exposition. And now you don't even have anymore coffee.

This is a pretty big waste of time.

...

Just a few more hours for today, then you'll be good. She'll be coming over you think sometime in the late afternoon. So you're

just waiting. Taking your time. Smelling the roses. Okay there's no roses but there *can* be roses. But that means... leaving the house. And doing things. Which you can't do right now. Because of... political reasons.

...

Sigh. There's gotta be an easier way to do this. A *quicker* way to do this. But... what? You ruminate, rolling around whatever was in your head. It's like you're trying to flatten the dough, but no matter how many times you use the old wooden roller the blasted thing won't even out into something usable.

...

Your brain definitely feels doughy.

...

You think... you think you might have something of a problem.



Insert Breaking Benjamin Reference

by raddifferent (twitter) // arachnidstardis (ao3)



Content warning for discussion of mental health, including brief description of a dissociative event.

Saturday, September 7th

Dear Diary,

I come to you again with another story of how I have once again blundered my way into being unkind to my partner, even in my own thick skull. Or at least, I think so. I've written this here many times, but your responsibility as my diary is to help me remember what actually happened, in case I remember something different later. I'm writing it again to remind myself more than you, anyways. At any rate, I continue to be frustrated with what I consider to be very irrational and silly, if not outright stupid, reactions to perfectly innocuous things.

Perhaps this is something to bring up with the very nice Carapacian therapist Callie and Roxy recommended I speak with. I enjoy seeing her every so often to just tell her about what's running through my brain, not in the least because she usually has something insightful and clear-headed to say about my responses. I suppose I can tell you, since you're unable to tell anyone else, that I still remember everything I did while wearing that dreadful tiara. Not even the Carapacian woman knows that, yet. I hesitate to drag my angst into daily life, to bring up to a Roxy that doesn't remember what I did to them what I am feeling... They were right to suggest their and Callie's therapist network, is the point I am trying to make.

Basically, I am writing to you because what is infinitely more frustrating to me as a no-nonsense kind of gal are the smaller things that get under my apparently very thin skin. They're especially galling because I've already been absolutely horrid to the point that I can never make up for it, and I continue to feel I'm annoying and difficult to deal with years afterwards.

For example: Today, as with every other Saturday before it, I woke up with the sun coming through the window and went downstairs to make Roxy and Callie pancakes. There isn't any Bisquick here, which is an out-and-out travesty if you ask me, so I've been forced to prepare my own mix from scratch in order to approximate my favorite, fluffy breakfast food. It still isn't quite the same, but





from the desk of Jane Crocker



neither I nor anyone I know is exactly raring to resurrect the dreadful fish woman's baking empire. Honestly, I don't know how I still enjoy baking, but it's not like she could pry a decade and a half of culinary experience from this noggin! I was telling you about the pancakes, though. Dearest diary, why must my reactions be so gosh-darned strong? I don't trust my own emotions at the best of times and this morning was certainly further from "best" than "worst."

Roxy is a dear, a sweetheart, and the love of my life, but I must admit I have a soft spot for that artificial goodness that is Pancake Syrup From A Plastic Container, whereas they have been ecstatic to discover what upstate New York maple syrup tastes like. I think they're fed up with the concept of preserved food as a whole, let alone artificial food, because they've gone to a different farmer's market every Thursday to try new food for the last six months. But me? I like my terrible fakey-fake syrup, especially if I can't get Bisquick. There's just a tang to it you can't get from scratch, you know?

Well, no you don't, you're inanimate paper.

Blast and damn. I don't understand why it was so important to me that the syrup be the syrup I liked! It didn't need to "ruin" breakfast for me! How can something that I am intensely aware is so small still leave me sitting on the kitchen floor crying at eight am?

Callie woke up before Roxy and asked me how I was feeling. I know they could see the snot bubbling out of my nose before I smeared it on my apron (another classy move from your favorite Crocker), but they asked anyways. Ever polite, our Callie. I told them what happened and how silly I felt about it, that I could be mad at my partner for forgetting to buy the syrup only I eat and almost rendering pancakes pointless to me when I could just suck it up and have some of her syrup this week even if I like it less...

Callie put their curious claws on my shoulder and reminded me it was okay for





from the desk of Jane Crocker



things to be important to me, even if they're not important to anyone else. Logically, I know what they say to be true in the sense that everyone has their own priorities, but I cannot imagine not measuring up what I want to what I feel I'm expected to want. It's been three years since anyone has given me an order or tasked me with doing something I could not say no to, and yet I still feel like I'm waiting for it to start again.

I suppose that was really the point my therapist was trying to make: You're here to help me remember what's real and what matters to me, even if it seems silly. I guess it's just a fact about me that I like bad pancake syrup, and it's okay to be upset about not getting something small I was looking forward to having.

I did end up making pancakes for everyone with Callie's help, and they suggested I try pureeing some strawberries with some orange juice to top the pancakes with instead of syrup. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed it (since it was something new), but it really worked! Callie has helped me in the kitchen before, and has made some... choice suggestions about how to prepare meat, but I shall have to remember to trust them in the future. I'll probably take their advice at times other than roast night.

Signing off for now,

Jane Crocker





from the desk of Jane Crocker



Sunday, September 8th

Dear Diary,

Saturday ended well enough - after the pancake breakfast I puttered around myself in the afternoon, did my usual weekend chores, and we all had a movie night. Roxy has been excited to show us their favorite movies from the late 2010s and early 2020s that I would have never seen and Callie never got around to watching. I'll admit I enjoyed the series of superhero movies they showed us, even though there were SO many, and all three of us loved this odd little movie about a mute woman and a fish monster that Roxy surprised us with last night.

This morning was alright, too. Sundays are the day I always take time to work in my garden, so I put on my nice old thick jeans, my favorite sweatshirt, and the big sunhat Callie wears into town. The raised beds Jake and Jade helped us put into the backyard are brilliant for not throwing out my back (amazing I have to worry about that at twenty, and at the beginning of my supposed immortality), so my jeans don't get as dirty as they used to at home. Well. This is still my home, but you know what I mean. My old home.

Anyways, as you're going to become aware, Sundays are "Pancakes, Gardening, and Reading" for me. The afternoon is always for a good book, with so many to catch up on without accounting for millennia that passed in seconds. I have my schedule, and I like it, because I get everything done that I want to do. Roxy even watched me put up my calendar on a bulletin board with all of the scrapbook paper I could get my mitts on in such short notice. My therapist and I talked about that a bit - the routines and the organizing. It wasn't something I really did before, but I've been leaning on more and more. She had mentioned it seemed like it was growing in importance for me, but I didn't realize how important until today, when Roxy asked me if I wanted to go with them and Rose to a book premiere party. Not for Rose; just for a friend whose novel had released that day.





from the desk of Jane Crocker



It was paralyzing. I just sort of stood there in my hat and big cloth gardening gloves and couldn't say anything, thinking about how much I wanted to get to that book next to my armchair and how disappointed in myself that I couldn't do what my partner wanted. Eventually, I just said, "But Sunday night is when I read," and I think Roxy was rather upset by that. They sort of lost a bit of their pep, and I think they really wanted to go with me to this event. How was I supposed to tell them that I just could not switch up what I had planned that quickly? Especially when it isn't their fault that this party was scheduled at a time I always reserve for myself?

After they left, it took me a few solid minutes to pry my feet from where they were rooted to the floor. I texted Dirk. He doesn't go out much, either; it's probably for different reasons than I have, but it achieves the same result. I told him basically what I told you (you'll have to forgive me if I refined my texts to him into the paragraphs above), and I didn't get a response for a few minutes. When he did get back to me, he just asked what my email address was. He knows what it is, but I think he said it to offer me the opportunity to ask why he needed it. A little while later, he sent me a link to a shared calendar, and another link for an app to download to my phone. Then, he opened up a group chat and asked Roxy to sync up their calendar, and left the group chat.

Gosh. I appreciate this man so much, but he could have lead with "why don't you two find a way to compare your schedules before the day of an event," like he said after he remotely downloaded the app to my phone for me when I took too long, instead of just doing it for me. Roxy and I are working on him, I swear. He did seem to have a point, though - I know Roxy has figured out they need to write down event times for themselves. The problem for them is that I don't see the work they're putting in, and that makes it easy to forget it's happening. We texted a bit in the chatroom Dirk made for us, and that did help. I tried to apologize for not being able to go with them that night, but I was surprised to find





from the desk of Jane Crocker



that they apologized to me before I could finish. Apparently, they had felt horrible that they hadn't given me enough time to prepare, and had also been frantically texting Dirk.

At that point, I asked them if they could call me, and they told me sure, they were still driving anyways. When I picked up, we were both sort of sniffly. I told them it seemed to me like we were stuck apologizing to each other for something neither of us really did wrong, and they laughed. They said something to the tune of us working so well together because we were different, but having big problems sometimes for the same reason. I told them I loved them, and they laughed and said the same back, and told me they had to go because they were "rolling up to the party, babe."

The room was quiet after they hung up.

What we got to at the end sounded a bit like something my therapist had said to me - every one of us is going to process what the game did to us differently, have different reactions, seek different ways of healing, because all of us had different experiences and are separate people. Somehow I had forgotten that applied to Roxy, too. They had a lot of similar experiences to me inside the game, but once I finally started believing what they told me about how they grew up (and I cannot begin to tell you how embarrassed I am about that), it's incredible that it took me until today to finally put those pieces together that they really weren't recovering the same as me.

I like making things grow, slowly, without any candy-powered enhancements. What has been helping me has been making sure I take the time to experience something wholly, stand in a moment and register every sense to remind myself that I am here, I am the only voice in my own brain, I am in control of my own body. Here, in the home we made, I don't feel I need much else. I am still trying to focus very intently on very small things.





from the desk of Jane Crocker



Roxy takes a road trip almost every week, trying as many new things as they can. Our pantry and fridge are full of organic and locally-grown ingredients they bring back for me to cook with; the bookshelves and sidetables are covered in tchotchkes and antique novels they thought Callie would find interesting to look at and draw and read. They've already spent too much time trapped in one place to miss much of what's going on in our new world, and I can't say I blame them, at all. Even if I can't really bear to go with them a lot of the time.

Calliope also takes pleasure in small things, running their claws lightly over the cover of every new novel, looking at the binding in the sunlight, flicking their thin forked tongue to taste the pages. Sometimes they join me in the garden, finding small lizards and large insects in among the plants and relocating them for me. They speak to each one as they walk it from the beds to the fence at the edge of the yard.

I've been learning how to make my own compost, using the scraps of vegetables and fruits left over from meals I make with the spoils of Roxy's outings. Next year, whatever spare energy we couldn't take advantage will help us grow vegetables, and maybe we can send some of what we grew back to those people.

I'm rambling, I suppose. Not that you can care, but I should maybe try to be more concise. This is for therapy, after all.

Roxy and I are different; it's obvious, but I really cannot keep expecting them to behave like me. And, it seems like they're also arriving to the same conclusion. I know it's going to be a lot of work, but I think we will be okay.

Hopefully yours,

Jane Crocker





from the desk of Jane Crocker



Tuesday, September 10th

Dear Diary,

I just got back from board game night with June and Dad! That was a really good break, I think. We try to get together once a month for Family Game Night, me because I moved out and June because... Well. We're far more like sisters, or cousins that are good friends, than we are strangers now that Dad basically adopted her. It has to be strange for him, taking care of someone who looks so much like his own mother, but maybe it's something like a second chance.

Second chances seem to be coming around a lot. Dad lives in a house almost identical to the one we both grew up in, right down to the flappy little doors in the kitchen entryway. It's missing a fireplace, because power here has been solar for centuries, and there is a distinct lack of taxidermied corpse in the living room. I must say, it makes it a fair amount easier to set up the coffee table for "Bust The Corporate Monopoly" now than before. Our return to this world with Dirk and Roxy's history troves sort of spurred a wave of nostalgia for past millennia. New game-makers mish-mash decades together and produce odd cultural responses, such as this "Anti-Monopoly." That's how Dirk described this game when I unwrapped the packaging two years ago, anyways.

We were halfway through the game, June rolling to see if her motion to enact a trade policy requiring up-front fees or debts in workforce training programs to be disclosed to applicants would pass. I was prepared to play a card that would assist her, as the name of the game was mutual cooperation, but she made the roll neatly and cheered. When we had first played this game, we followed the rules to the letter and read out the little historical blurb in the rule book, learning about the real 21st century history this board game was based on. Now, we all cheered for the end of tractor-trailer indentured servitude and moved on to the next turn.

Dad picked up the dice and asked how our weeks were as he landed on a high-speed railroad and contributed to the public transportation fund. June drew a card,





from the desk of Jane Crocker



added a point to the "people's power" meter in the middle of the board, and began chattering away about her and Kanaya's latest endeavor to coax Rose into letting them read her manuscript draft. I let her talking wash over me as I tapped the party hat piece around the start position, and paused to decide between the choices of bonus: one skill point to attribute as I pleased, or one point to the "people's power" meter. I chose the former, allocated a point to "mechanized crafts," and prepared to use the skill bonus to roll to improve the factories on a square I had helped free from corporate control.

It was more than a bit on the nose, if I'm being honest, but Dirk rarely gave gifts without an ironic meaning.

June finally couldn't talk about Rose's book any longer, which was honestly surprising, and the two of them turned to me. I ended up veering a bit into talking about the conflict Roxy and I had been having, and my dad had some wisdom to share. He rarely doesn't, but this time I found I actually wanted to hear what he had to say.

To my surprise, he just sort of said what I already knew - that it's alright for me to react differently to things than Roxy, and even in ways that I don't necessarily want to.

The last bit was new, I suppose, but between my therapist and my own writing here, I had come to the conclusion Roxy and I were our own people already.

Then he said something I absolutely have heard but people still think I need it drilled into me - that it's not my fault how I feel, just how I react. He's right, obviously, but the thought of it just sent me back into thinking about all the times I reacted in a way I did not want to, and hurt Roxy, or someone else.

They both must have sensed my drop in mood, because June "accidentally" flipped the board over and announced that it was an excellent afternoon for a movie, and hopped up to flip through Dad's DVD collection. He still insists on physical copies of media, so Dave alchemizes him movies when he asks for them.





from the desk of Jane Crocker



Dad sat on one side of me on the couch, June on the other; once we were all settled, she pulled the blanket off the back of the couch and spread it over the three of us. I managed to stay awake for "Face/Off," but fell asleep by the time we were halfway through "The Magician's Apprentice."

I think I like having a slightly bigger family, with a sister. I like the reassuring warmth of my relatives next to me as we watch a movie together. It feels like something remembered, something nostalgic, except I haven't ever had a sibling before.

Found family is important, but shucks if I'm not thankful for the family we were born into as well.

Tiredly yours,

Jane Crocker





Wednesday, September 11th

Dear Diary,

I guess I should have known better than to overexert myself not too long after I did a pretty significant amount of socializing, but here we are, in the attic where the light is dimmer and I can pretend I came up here to enjoy the bean bag chair instead of that I'm sort of hiding from my partner.

That was rather ominous. Let me back up. I wanted to make it up to Roxy that I couldn't go with them to the book party on Sunday night, so I agreed to accompany them to their farmer's market this week. We went a day early for Roxy - I always have free time on Wednesday afternoons, and this particular location is only open on Wednesdays.

It was a half-hour train ride to the place Roxy had looked up. We sat on the train with the foldable shopping cart they'd purchased a while back, watching the scenery go by. I hadn't been out this way since the seasons started shifting.

Leaves are starting to fall to the ground. I suspect, like the last week or two, we will be bringing home the descendants of squash, apples, and pumpkins. They have the same names, but they're slightly different than what I remember. It's a heck of a cooking challenge!

When we arrived, it felt more like a fair than a market or store. There were tented booths set up, sure, but they were colorful cloth and all shapes and sizes. It was far from the uniform white plastic mass-produced tents I'd seen at farmers' markets in Washington. Consorts rolled small wagons of produce from a nearby farm out to the tents, and a solartruck arrived at one point to drop off some apples. A group of children, carapacians and trolls and humans, rushed over to the truck. They clamored to get a sweet piece of fruit from the iguana and turtle truck drivers, who had begun unloading crates from the back. Some adults followed the kids over to help unload the truck, and Roxy jumped to do the same.

Really, I was fine until we had been there for a while. I haven't been around or talked to so many people in ages and ages, and I didn't realize exactly how much it was bothering me until we got some food to eat and it didn't settle my





from the desk of Jane Crocker



stomach.

I started to feel tired, more tired than I had in a long time, and I didn't feel like I could even speak anymore. I waved Roxy off to help, and wandered over to a large tree with several boulder-sized pumpkins resting near the base. There were also some straw bales, and I sat on one, leaning against an oversized gourd. We had been there for only an hour or two, and Roxy had been excitedly chattering about the fair events, which were due to start for adults a bit later. The kids' donut-eating contest and sack race had already happened, and I had watched Roxy rather than the competitions because of the stars in their eyes. It struck me again how much they had missed as a kid. And there I was, unable to even get up and help the nice people who organize the entire event, for reasons that made no sense to me. Why was I so damned tired just from small talk with a few very nice farmers?

Roxy found me after they were done carrying a few crates to a recently-unfolded table. I think they could tell something was wrong pretty quickly, and asked me if I needed anything. I just shrugged, and leaned on them, and they sort of sighed and asked if I wanted to go home. They smiled at me, and put their arm around me, but I must have annoyed them, right? I apologized a few times on the way home, and they smiled and pet my hair a bit and told me I hadn't done anything wrong, but I can't shake the feeling I took something fun away from them.

I'm up here in this beanbag chair with the fog mostly evaporated off of my brain like the sun finally came out, but it's almost dark out the window. I was supposed to do something nice for my partner today, and I ruined it. I don't have much else to add - this just frustrated me.

Hopefully I have better news for you soon,

Jane Crocker





from the desk of Jane Crocker



Thursday, September 12th

Dear Diary,

Roxy woke me up this morning by making me eggs over easy with bacon and biscuits, and bringing it right to me in bed. I was sort of fuzzy at first, and then the bacon smell hit the back of my head and I was very much awake. They brought the cat in, too, and we all snuggled at the headboard. The cat got bits of bacon fat because Roxy spoils him.

Roxy asked me what happened yesterday. I suppose I should have expected that - they care about me. I told them what I had felt. I didn't really know what it was before, but as I explained it to Roxy, they nodded and told me it sounded like I had either had an anxiety attack or experienced some sort of dissociation.

I was going to argue, but they shushed me with a forkful of eggs and told me I didn't get to say I hadn't had it bad enough for that to happen to me. I sort of glared at them, but that was what I was going to say. Roxy knows that, because my therapist told me to tell them, but I can't say I don't still think it's a little true.

They pulled out their phone and sort of snuggled into me, stealing a piece of biscuit from my plate and dipping it in the jam they had put in a shot glass on the side. I put one arm around them and scooped some of the eggs up with my fork, following it with some biscuit and runny yolk.

Roxy didn't ask me to do anything - we just sat in bed all morning, joined later by Callie. They tended to sit apart from us, usually, but Roxy had gotten them a long body pillow with a faux-fur outside, and they like to lay on top of it and read at the end of the bed. They both fell asleep in the afternoon sunshine, the cat settled between us, and I managed to wiggle my journal out from under my alarm clock without disturbing Roxy to write this.

I didn't think I'd really get here, honestly. Things are far from perfect, yes; I still find myself unable to go out among all of the people just yet, and I'm still... estranged from some of my friends, to put it lightly. I am not at all where I thought I would find myself at this age. I can't even stand the thought of





from the desk of Jane Crocker



putting on a pencil skirt, let alone walking into a board room and giving a presentation on facts and numbers and projected growth. It almost haunts me, the idea that I would be disappointing my sixteen year old self.

But do you know what, my patient listener? I don't really care for the approval of someone I had to leave behind a long time ago, even if that someone was who I used to be. When I actually sat down and listened, really listened, to what Roxy had to tell me about how they grew up, instead of outright denying it, finally disavowed of my notion there could be nothing fantastic or out of the ordinary to life, I was forced to consider that I was wrong. Poor Roxy and Callie have put up with years of my arguing and difficulty accepting some hard truths, over and over, but I think I've come a long way. I don't have to hold myself to some standard given to me by people I never met who never truly cared about me. Their world is dead, and my world is a lazy afternoon with the people I love, just resting. Nothing else - just resting.

Carefully optimistic,

Jane Crocker



US AIR FORCE
TOP SECRET

Palace of Cold & Silence

Jonaya Riley (AltUniverseWash)

Twitter: AltUniverseWash
Ao3: AltUniverseWash

EYES ONLY

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD
February 18th, 1989

Two gosh-darn days to get us off the Imperial carrier and onto the continent, then another day riding the ice crawler inland! Crocker Corp's got their dang setup right in the middle of the Southern Shelf. They said there's something further in that they want us to look at but none of the Imperials were saying anything about it.

Dad said it's probably some piece of Imperial tech that crashed in the ice during the war back in '61 - I wasn't born yet, but from what he's told me they had run a lot of drones over the South Pole and the storms took down more than a few. Not sure why they're waiting until almost thirty years later to get this one. Maybe they didn't even know about it until just now. The Condesce is always interested in historical items from the War anyway - probably the drone has some kind of recording device they can pull data off of.

All these hold-ups are unacceptable! We'll have a month before we're pushing up on the start of Winter, then we won't be able to get off the Shelf until October! I know the base is equipped for the stay but I'd just as soon not be trapped inside there for that long!

Jake is riding along with us too - to be perfectly honest I think having him along makes more sense than me! What in the world does an expedition to retrieve a drone need with a biotechnology post-grad?

It's pretty, at least. That's something. We passed some penguins on the way in and they're adorable!





Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

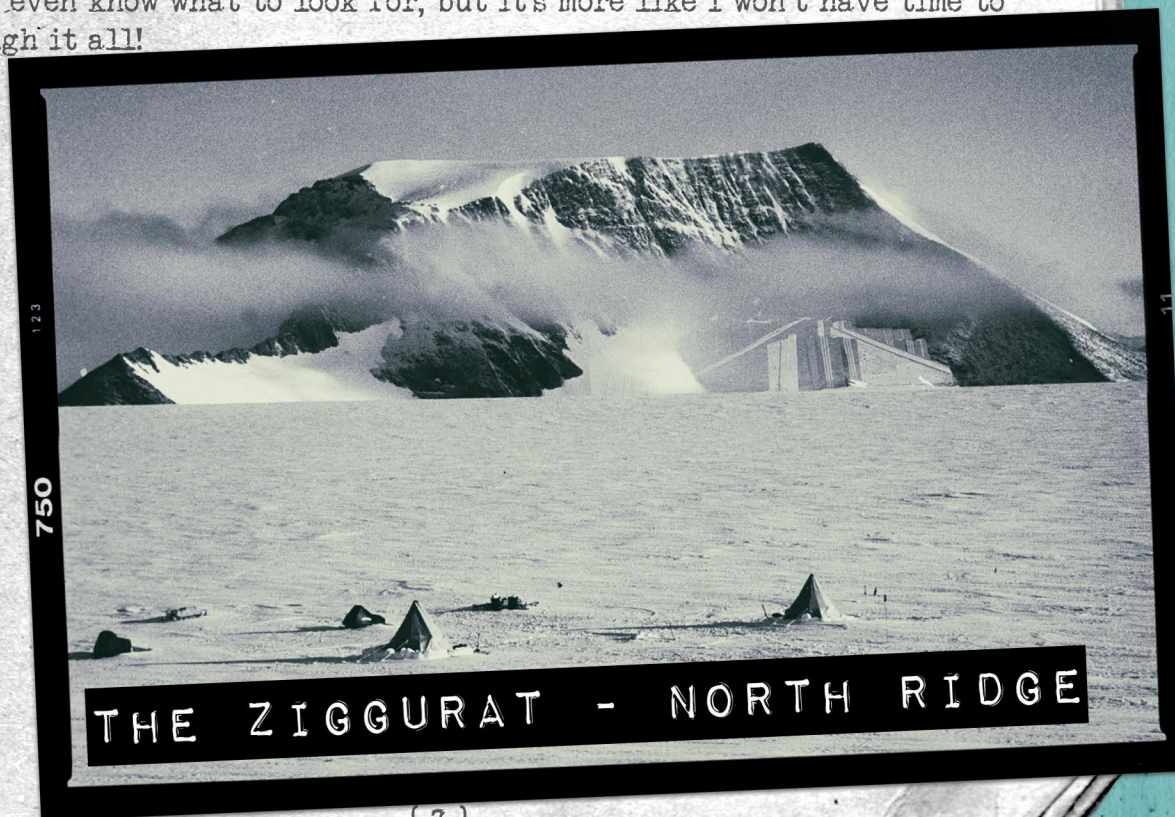
February 22nd, 1989

We're finally settled in at the base camp. First day in, we got hit by a windstorm and had to shelter before we even got to the camp. The crawler almost blew over! The camp isn't much to look at - a bunch of pre-fab buildings braced up against the wind. Radio tower looks like it's about to fall over.

Jake and Dad immediately started rooting around to see what they had for us - the rest of the expedition crew had been out before so they got everything set up. We have a terminal that hooks up to the radio tower which gives us access to the CrockerNet. It's slow, but it's better than nothing.

There's an old typewriter I can use for my personal notes - I don't want to waste generator power on the computer when I don't have to.

The last expedition left plenty of junk behind - piles of sketches and references and stuff. It looks like the main group had been excavating a structure buried in a mountain to the north they called "the Ziggurat" and they left behind their drawings and photos of it. According to all this, it's been two years since the last expedition. I was worried that I wouldn't even know what to look for, but it's more like I won't have time to go through it all!





DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

April 10th, 1999

ADDENDUM: The references to an expedition in 1987 are among several pieces of information that are completely unconfirmed. We have no evidence of any Antarctic expedition in the specific area referenced here in 1987, or indeed any other year in the 1980s.

Moreover, to the matter of the location present at [REDACTED], referred to in the enclosed documents as "The Ziggurat." According to all survey data and preliminary findings from Task Force [REDACTED], no such location exists. There is a large rock formation, known mainly as [REDACTED]. Other than that, there is nothing of note in the location.

Photographs provided do indeed seem to depict [REDACTED], but have clearly been altered in some way as to add evidence of a structure where none exists.

Further information can be provided to staff of Project [REDACTED] and Project [REDACTED]

-Dr. Jade Harley
Project Lead, Project SunG



Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

February 27th, 1989

Finally got to go out to the Ziggurat myself after almost a dang week! Jake and I went out with Carter and Riley.

I was talking with Riley, and she said that they weren't here in '87 with the last expedition. In fact, no one was. It seems like the last expedition just vanished without a trace - which is incredibly ominous and bad! She also said they had a really bad storm come in without warning right after most of the crew went to go to the Ziggurat, so that's probably what happened. It wouldn't be the first time that Crocker Corp had to write off a whole mission as a loss.

They left a lot of stuff behind at the Ziggurat as well, but it's all torn up and thrown around by the storm. Mostly useless junk now, so we brought all our own stuff. We set up a temp camp at the base of it and set up overnight. It was spooky sitting there in the shadow of it - the structure is way bigger than I thought it would be and I've got no clue who built it!

I've been reading the logs from the former crew from the '87 expedition over the last week. It seems like they came here and set up most of what's here now. The previous trips had mostly just been scouting. They actually got here in the summer of '86, stayed over-winter, then they were in contact until the winter of '87 when they stopped responding after the big storm. I've found spotty journals and logs for a good chunk of their research.

Mostly it's mundane stuff - setting up camp and weather reports and stuff like that. They talk a lot about finding the Ziggurat on the side of the mountain but ice and fallen rock blocked the entrance. They were talking about using explosives to clear it off, but also about trying to get samples of the rock to bring back. Crocker Corp and the Empire seemed particularly interested in those samples, but nothing in the notes is very specific as to why.

Jake thinks it's some kind of lost civilization and I guess I agree with him. He keeps talking about how Atlantis was here all along and maybe Antarctica was warm a few thousand years ago. That nonsense - and these buildings are OLD. Much older than a few thousand years. I won't know for sure until I get a chance to send some samples back to Crocker, but the way they look suggests tens of thousands of years at least. And the architecture of the Ziggurat is like nothing I've seen before. Even Jake can't tell me what human civilization ever built something quite like it.

Dad was worried about us heading over there - he said he'd stay back at base camp and try to get the radio array working properly. I'd like to be able to check in with Crocker Corp HQ sometime and arrange to have some more equipment sent out. Another person who's familiar with archaeology wouldn't hurt either - to excavate the Ziggurat beyond whatever the '87 crew was able to do. I've got some theories I wouldn't mind running by Dirk and Roxy when I'm able to talk to the outside world again too.



Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD
February 28th, 1989

We went inside the Ziggurat as much as we could, although there's a rock-fall inside that means we won't be able to go any further without explosives, and those are back at the base camp. It's weird though - the whole time I was in there, it felt like there was something weirdly familiar about it. You know how sometimes you walk into a new room and you get that weird prickly feeling all over your neck? Like you've been there before even when you know you haven't.

We radioed back to Dad and he said that the main array is almost back online. So we're going to head back as soon as we can.

I found something weird in the walls of the Ziggurat - a fossilized snake of some kind? I'm not sure, but it's really old. Also, it's huge - I know the photo doesn't do it justice but the thing is like ten or fifteen feet long! Jake said he thought it might be some kind of giant prehistoric snake but he hadn't heard of a specific species like that before.

All of this is huge - if the Ziggurat was here for thousands of years, that means humans were here for thousands of years. Which redefines a lot of what we thought we knew about human history and the climate of the world back then. This fossil - it must've been moved here intact by whoever built this place and that's a gosh-darn miracle of human ingenuity!





DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

April 10th, 1999

ADDENDUM: Again, there is a dearth of information that would be able to help us confirm anything found herein. Were it not for the exceedingly unusual circumstances surrounding the retrieval of the container in which these documents rested, I would dismiss them as a hoax outright.

I have conferred with a colleague of mine, noted paleo-biologist Dr. June Egbert, and she concurs that the species depicted in the previous photograph is indeed similar to the remains of [REDACTED], which was discovered recently in [REDACTED]. While this is interesting information, it only seems to strengthen the idea that this is perhaps some kind of elaborate hoax.

That does not, of course, explain the age of the surrounding ice. Nor does it explain many of the details that are similar in so many ways to observable reality, but differing in key points.

I hope it should go without saying that I was unable to find evidence of a Dr. Jane Crocker of any kind who would even remotely fit the description provided.

-Dr. Jade Harley
Project Lead, Project SunGlass

March 2nd, 1989

gutsyGumshoe [GG] began bothering timeusTestified [TT] at 09:18

GG: What time is it right now?

TT: What? Why in the hell would you ask that?

GG: Because I'm in... oh shoot I don't think I'm supposed to say. I'm in the field.

TT: Oh shit. You're a mother-fucking globe-trotter, right?

TT: Whereas I am but a humble deliver of the oceanographic depths.

TT: Dr. Dirk Strider, Ph-motherfucking-D. Can't know where Super-Doctor Jane is.

GG: Jeez, sorry! It's a Crocker thing - I'm not supposed to say where I am.

GG: But I wanted to see how you were doing.

GG: How're things? How's... the ocean?

TT: I'm just messing with you, Jane. I know you're doing some shady corporate shit or whatever.

TT: Ocean's just fine. And to answer your earlier question, it's like 8 pm here.

TT: What's on your mind?

GG: Nothing much. Just weird stuff happening down here, you know?

TT: Weird in what sense?

GG: Weird in the weird sense.

TT: Elucidating. I'm elucidated.

GG: God you're such a jerk! :B

TT: So the post-doc committee tells me.

GG: God I know, right?!

GG: Dad's been on me about that! Like I'm an expert in everything all of a

1 sudden!

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6 GG: Anyway, I don't wanna say too much over the telnet but, you know, it's weird
7
8
9 here.

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13 GG: We've found some stuff that kinda freaks me out.

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17 TT: Freaks you out?

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21 GG: Yeah. Like, stuff that's not supposed to be the way it is.

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25 TT: Equally elucidating to your earlier statement.

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29 TT: A rightful wizard of elucidation.

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33 GG: God you sound like Roxy now.

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37 TT: Wozard.

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41 GG: Oh flip off, Dirk. I've gotta go now!

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45 TT: Wonk.

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49 GG: :B
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March 2nd, 1989

gutsyGunshoe [GG] began bothering tipsyGnostalgia [TG] at 09:38

GG: Good morning, Roxy!

TG: mornin 2 u 2 binch!

GG: Is it really morning where you are?

TG: rly!

GG: Really really?

TG: rly rly rly!!!

GG: Where are you anyway?

TG: im in shanghi rite now

GG: Shanghai?

TG: yepyp!

GG: Doing what?

TG: dam flo ctrl proj 4 gov

TG: look i g2g kk?

TG: ttyl!

GG: Okay, sure, I'll talk later, Roxy!

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 2nd, 1989

I know I couldn't tell Dirk much more, but I'm finding some stuff that's really getting to me here. I've been searching through the logs looking for something more than daily chore lists and talk about the weather. It feels like something big is missing. Logs have gaps in them - big gaps, even. I haven't found ANY of the expedition logs that talk about the Ziggurat beyond the basic name and a couple photos of it.

I've been looking for any kind of crew diaries - something that talks more about what was happened up until everyone disappeared. If they got lost in a storm, I want to know WHY they were out there in the first place. The Ziggurat isn't exactly inviting and if they were headed there, then there must've been a reason for it.

Dad and Jake are already talking about heading out again to try to clear the passage. We've got explosives, and Jake and a couple of our crew have experience in clearing tunnels. They think that if the passage isn't blocked too much, they could probably have it cleared and ready to proceed within a week. There's another storm blowing in that's supposed to last through tomorrow and then I think they'll give it a try. I guess I'll go with them? I don't know.

I asked Jake how he feels about all of this and of course he was excited to go back and poke around. Growing up near the ruins like he did, I guess it makes sense he's so keen on all of this. Archaeologists, I swear to god!

He told me that it was silly to be afraid of anything - the structure is thousands of years old. "The past is dead" is what he told me. Which... yeah, I guess. It's all unnerving to see, but maybe that's just because I'm not used to weird old buildings in mountains and fossilized prehistoric snakes and stuff like that. It's a little bit creepy looking, like something from an old monster movie from when I was a kid!

We'll be sending our first report back to Crocker Corp soon just to let them know what's going on, since they're the main ones funding this. I don't think they're gonna be awfully happy - if they wanted War tech I think this is probably off by a few thousand years or so.

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 3rd, 1989

God I hate when the storms come through! I've never been down here before, so I had no idea how terrifying they could be. Dad and Jake both went before, and they said that's just how it is sometimes. But something about it feels so wrong. I know that's just me being silly, but still.

I found another crew diary that belonged to one of the researchers and I'm trying to go through it. They were here for a full winter and then into the summer again and there's a lot of notes about weather patterns and ice core samples - it looks like they were here doing a bunch of research into local weather patterns for some reason. I wish I knew where in this place their data was!

Or their communications back to Corporate! If they were working for Crocker Corp, then they'd be required to check in at least every week if their radio array was up. So there should be the order sheets and report-backs and stuff. They obviously had something to do here since I've got mentions of it in their logs and this diary, but I'd love to know what exactly the deal was!

From the look of it, they found the Ziggurat right before the weather turned bad enough to have to hunker down for the winter. They made preliminary maps and were planning to check it out in some more detail, but the expedition didn't have anyone with much experience in that so it was mostly just curiosity.

But then half the pages are torn out of the dang diary! I spent most of the day looking for them and then just gave up and played cards with Jake and a couple of the crew. Dad's been really quiet all day, just making notes about something or other. It all feels tense and I don't like it.

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 4th, 1989

Storm cleared up and everything's quiet now and I'm not sure if I like that more or less. It's eerie. As soon as the weather cleared, we checked the radio array and then fired up the terminal to send our first report-back out to Crocker Corp. Hopefully they'll respond back quickly, but whether or not they do maybe doesn't matter - I think Jake and Dad are pretty set on going back out to the Ziggurat tomorrow.

I feel like I had weird dreams last night but I can't remember anything. It's weird here - we're still in the part of the year where it never really gets DARK so it just kinda gets all dim for a while and then it's daylight again. I asked Jake if it ever gave him weird dreams before and he kinda didn't answer me. Mumbled something about not remembering anything when he slept and then went off to fuss at something. God he's so frustrating sometimes! He's always like this!

I'm gonna spend the rest of the day trying to find the rest of that stupid diary. Or maybe something else that talks about what they actually did here. This is so dumb!!!



> START OF MESSAGE

> 3/4/1989

> FROM: CROCKER CORP EXPEDITION REVIEW BOARD

> ATTN: CROCKER CORP PERSONNEL

> RE: MISSION DIRECTIVES

> INFORMATION RECEIVED AND ANALYZED

> WE AGREE WITH YOUR PLAN TO EXAMINE STRUCTURE

> HEREAFTER REFERRED TO AS "ZIGGURAT"

> RETRIEVE AND CATALOG ALL PORTABLE ARTIFACTS

> PHOTOGRAPH AND LABEL ALL FIXED STRUCTURES IN PLACE

> REPORT BACK ON ALL FINDINGS IN/AROUND ZIGGURAT

> REPORT BACK ON ANY UNUSUAL CREW BEHAVIOR

> REPORT BACK ON ANY UNUSUAL DREAMS EXPERIENCED BY CREW

> DO NOT ATTEMPT TO INTERFACE WITH ANY ARTIFACTS BEYOND COLLECTION

> STAND BY FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS

> END OF MESSAGE

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 5th, 1989

The Board's response was a strange one - but I guess they did send us to investigate whatever happened to be there. Just maybe it wasn't what they were expecting. Or maybe it was? I don't know - it feels like there's more here than they're letting on. That line about not interfacing with the artifacts.

We're going out today - taking the crawler and heading out with explosives and stuff to try to clear the passage. Dad said I don't need to come along if I don't want to, but I insisted. I'm never going to stop being afraid of this thing if I don't go along, right?

We'll leave once the crew is done prepping the crawlers in a little bit. It'll be twilight out at the Ziggurat when we get there, but we'll camp over a couple nights while we work.

I still can't help but feel weird about it all. Excited, I guess, but nervous. I mean, Jake's right that this fundamentally changes how we see human civilization, but also... if Crocker Corp is interested in this it means that the Condesce is interested too and she's... well, you know.

She's not human.

Does this mean they were here before the 60's? Before the War?

I know I sound like a silly biddy talking about a spooky old building when I literally grew up in the shadow of an alien invasion but... the Empire didn't turn out to be THAT bad. They flew in and took over and everything pretty much kept going the same way it had. Maybe even stopped a real-life nuclear war from happening!

March 5th, 1989

gutsyGunshoe [GG] began bothering tipsyGnostalgia [TG] at 13:40

GG: You busy right now?

TG: m on luuuunch tiem janey babey

TG: sup?

GG: You do work with the Empire right?

GG: Like, with technology stuff?

TG: yeppers

GG: They ever ask you to do anything weird?

GG: Or, like, say weird stuff to you? About dreams?

TG: wat?

TG: no janey thaz weird AF

TG: liek i dont see them or n-e thing

TG: no one does

TG: jus dronz n shit

TG: n human ppl workin 4 em

TG: but no - just norml shiznit

GG: I don't wanna say too much, but they asked us to catalog a bunch of stuff.

GG: And they also told us to report any unusual dreams. Like, why?

TG: weirrrd

TG: r u ok?

GG: I guess? I mean, I thought they wanted us to bring back War tech.

GG: And I get that - like, they do that all the time.

GG: But this feels different and like...

GG: Wrong, somehow?

TG: got 2 go w ur gutz gurrrrrrl

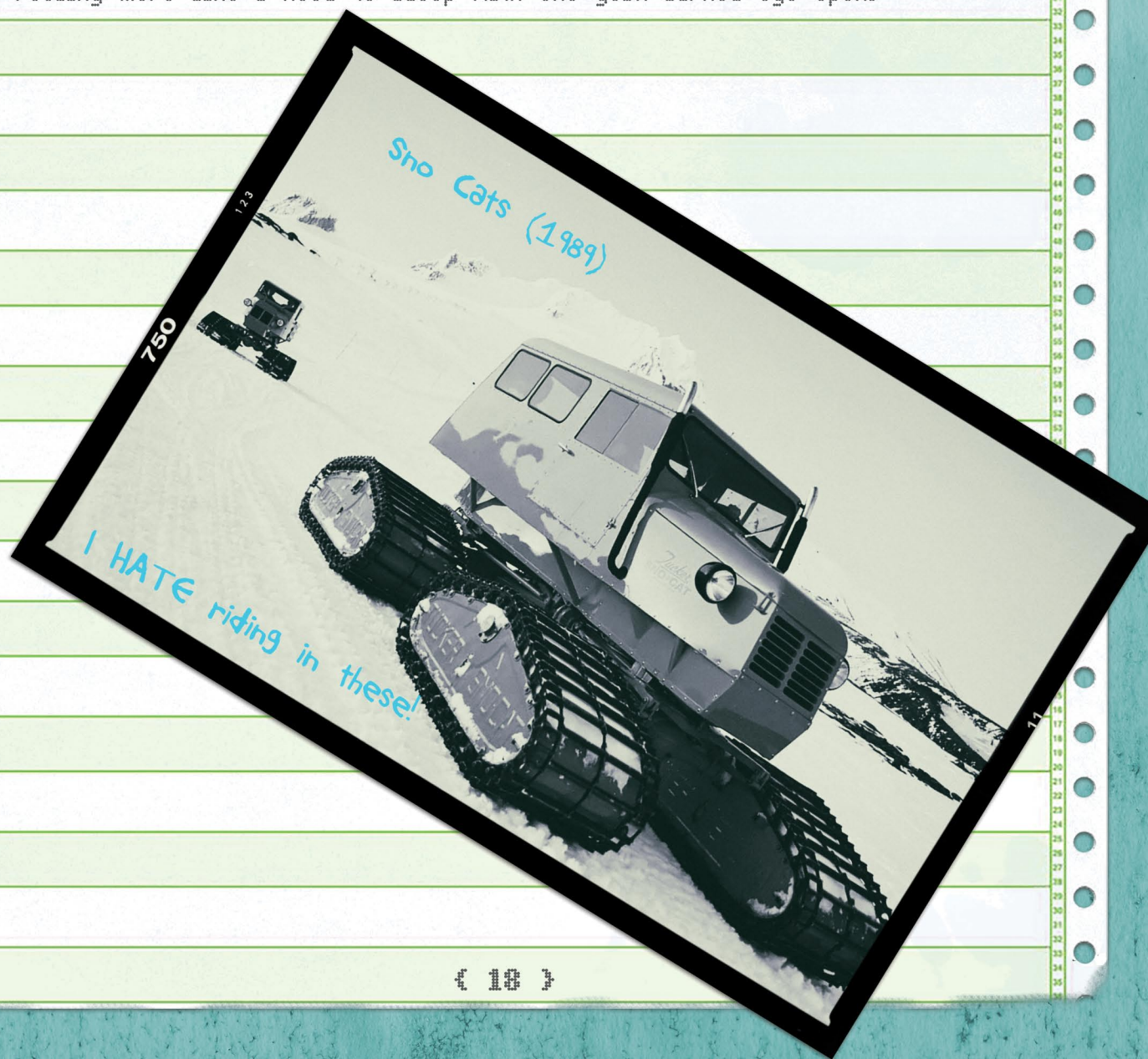
GG: Well my "gutz" tell me that this is all kinds of hinkey.

GG: Sorry, I just wanted to get a second opinion on all of this.

TG: u got it! u feelin better now?

GG: No, not really.

GG: Feeling more like I need to sleep with one gosh-darned eye open.





DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PROJECT SUNGLASS

April 10th, 1999

ADDENDUM: I hope it goes without saying to my audience that we have never, in spite of the findings of Projects [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], been invaded by aliens of any kind. We are also not, to the best of my knowledge, subject to a global empire of the sort described in these accounts.

The more I read these, the more I'm leaning towards "hoax" - although that doesn't have the convenience of explaining why the hell a sealed metal container was buried in thousands of years worth of ice. This is, to say the least, puzzling.

Offhand, I'd suggest we hand this all off to the folks over at [REDACTED] and just let them puzzle it over. This kind of weird shit is just up their alley.

Forget it. I'm going home for the night. If anyone has any more questions about any of this, contact Dr. Rose LaLonde in [REDACTED] division and leave me the hell alone.

-Dr. Jade Harley
Project Lead, Project SunGlass

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 6th, 1989

Jake is making fun of me for bringing the typewriter along, but he can stuff it! I hate the sound of the wind in the temporary shelters, so at least this way I have the sound of the typing to try to focus on.

We got out here as twilight was falling and finished setting up the rest of the camp, then slept. All of today we spent setting up equipment and getting explosives ready. Jake thinks the cave-in can be cleared in one go if we use the explosives smartly, so that's what we're doing first thing tomorrow morning.

Barely slept at all last night - kept waking up and thinking I heard something. Kept thinking about the dang line about unusual dreams that Crocker Corp put in their directive. I didn't HAVE any unusual dreams, but maybe that was just on account of I could barely sleep at all. The whole place has me spooked - it doesn't feel like we're SUPPOSED to be here at all.



Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 7th, 1989

Gosh - where do I even START with today?

Last night was the same - woke up feeling strange, like I should be remembering something but couldn't. Kept thinking about the stupid comment about dreams from the Board. Gosh dang silly is all. Of course I also slept terribly! No dang dreams, but no real sleep either. Wind didn't help - kept sounding like voices howling off that stupid Ziggurat and that was just the gosh-darned kicker.

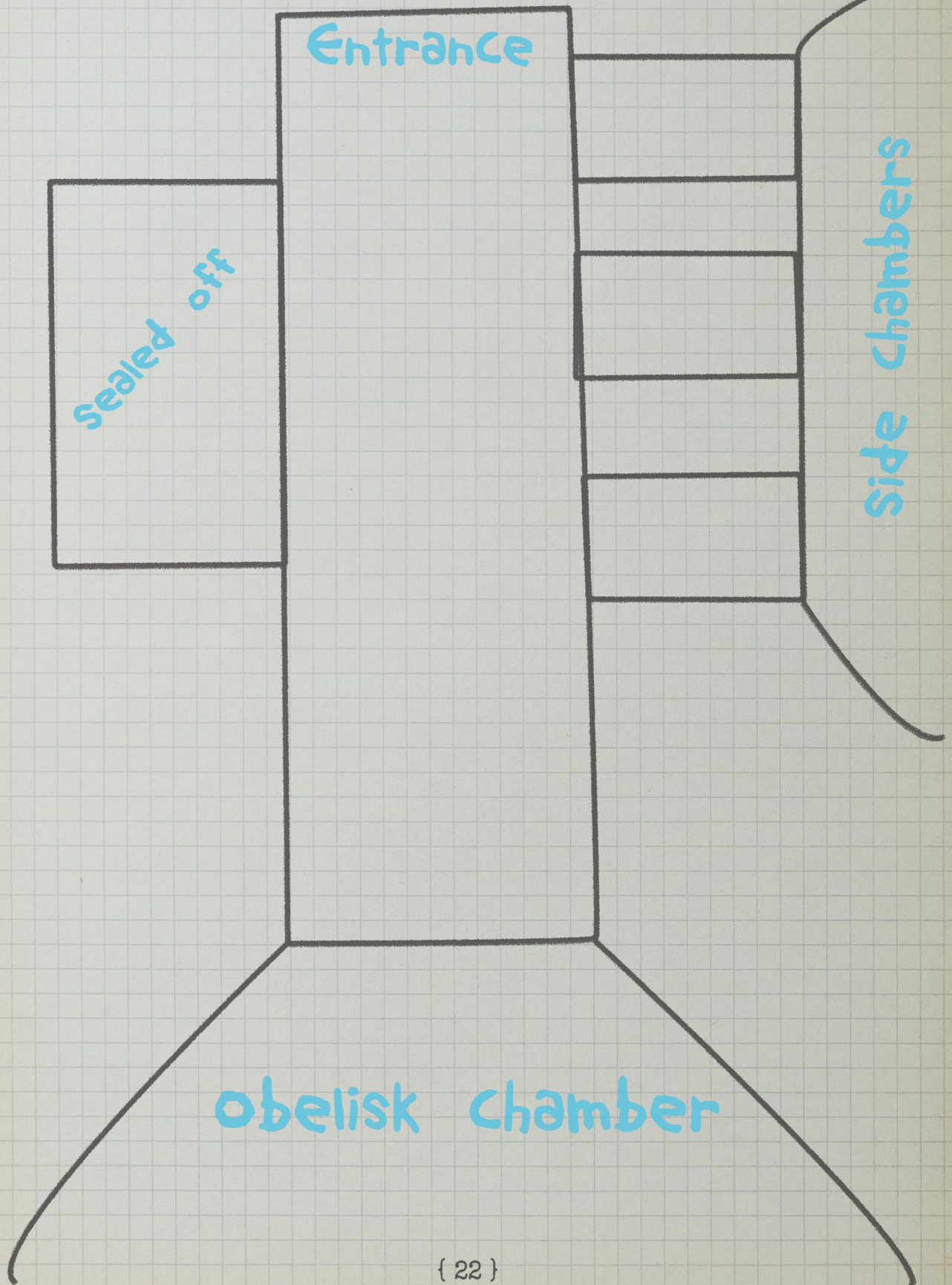
We got up early and the crew and Jake went to prep the explosives to clear out the access tunnel in the Ziggurat and Dad and I took a look around the exterior. The architecture doesn't look familiar - like, it's got elements I want to say are from various human civilizations, but also I can't quite put my finger on it. I think the points in common are just because of universal stuff - like, if you build a big old heavy pile of stone you need supports for it.

Honestly, some parts remind me of the Imperial designs. I know we don't see much of what they build but... like with their drones and ships and stuff. It reminds me of the way they think about building stuff, if that makes sense. A lot of weird angles and things that just don't sit right to a human eye.

Can't stop thinking about that big snake thing in the walls either. I wonder where they found it. Or why they put it there. Or who "they" even are, to be honest!

The crew spent most of the day preparing the charges, getting ready to open up the passage right around when twilight started in again. We all went out and the noise was something else! I could actually feel it moving through the ground when they went off and I was sure that the whole place was gonna come crashing down. But nope - it was fine!

We weren't going to explore today, just reinforce the opening and make preparations for tomorrow. We'll go inside in the morning.



Ziggurat Entrance (1989)



Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 8th, 1989

We made our first trip inside the Ziggurat today - it's huge! Jake said that normally ancient structures aren't so large inside - ancient architecture didn't allow for large interior spaces and stuff like that. But once you get through the entrance tunnel there's a massive interior space. There's a couple rooms off to the side of the main tunnel.

And there's the main room, straight ahead. A giant staircase leads down to another big room with this weird stone obelisk just sitting there in the middle of it. The stone inside looks too clean - too new to be that old! And the obelisk looks like it was just carved, but there's no way it could be! Jake and Dad both agreed that the cave-in happened a long time ago - like, at least hundreds if not thousands of years ago.

There's a weird symbol carved at the base of the obelisk, but that's the only place we've seen any kind of carving or anything yet. Jake says that's really unusual - normally there'd be carvings and decorations all over the place, but this is so simple.

I feel strange when I'm in there. I don't know how to put it - like everything is moving in slow motion around me and I can hear things I shouldn't be able to. That probably sounds completely crazy, but it's like the acoustics of the place are all wrong.

I don't know how much we're going to be able to find in there - the further parts of the temple are either caved in or sealed off with heavy doors. Jake's talking about blasting to get through - I don't know if that's a good idea.





DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

April 11th, 1999

ADDENDUM: At the request of Dr. LaLonde, I checked any Antarctic expedition reports from [REDACTED], the area that appears to be roughly described in these accounts. As expected, I failed to find anything that would correlate to the "Ziggurat" or any of the items described in these accounts. The symbol sketched in the document is similarly unknown to me, although there's something oddly *familiar* about it and I can't quite place the reason why. I thought that perhaps it was similar to the [REDACTED] found in the case file for [REDACTED] but I checked those records again and the similarity is, at best, superficial.

I will admit that I didn't sleep well last night, and so my judgment may be somewhat impaired. I am ironically reminded of the directive to "report back on any unusual dreams" although at this juncture I wouldn't describe them as "unusual" so much as perhaps "curious." I will continue to review the files here today, hopefully arriving at some more solid conclusions.

As to the precise nature of why and how this container was buried in the ice, I am still at a loss. My best-guess is that either the thing was a hoax perpetrated by the research team that claims to have "discovered" it, or it was placed there previously by someone with sufficient knowledge of Antarctic research to make it appear that the item had been sealed in the ice for thousands of years. Both cases are, I admit, flimsy on their face.

Much like [REDACTED] I cannot outright rule out the possibility that, however outlandish it appears, this artifact is genuine. Of course, that leads me to far more questions than it answers.

-Dr. Jade Harley
Project Lead, Project SunGlass

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD
March 10th, 1989

It's early now, but I needed to write this down as soon as I remembered. Last night I was trying to get to sleep and I swear that I heard something on top of the wind! Gosh if it wasn't the sound of massive footsteps in the distance! It's the craziest thing, and it doesn't make a lick of sense at all, but it's what I heard!

I woke Dad up to ask if he'd heard it and he said that it's probably ice settling. He said that the ice sometimes expands and contracts and sounds just like someone huge walking around. Said it's called "Giant's Footfalls" and the expeditions down here all talk about it. That's weird - I wish I had some more records of the expedition that was here before us. Did they hear those footsteps in the distance? Did they wonder what they were too, or were they just as convinced it was just Giant's Footfalls caused by the ice expanding and contracting?

Yesterday was just cataloging all kinds of stuff in the Ziggurat. Marking off locations of things and recording and photographing and measuring. It's so BORING to do archaeology in real life. I remember watching Indiana Jones and the Imperial Mandate last year when it came out in theaters and that made it all look so exciting - he got to go on adventures and fight the Nazis for the Empire. Which... I know it didn't happen like that in real life, but it's still fun to think about.

I guess I'm going on an adventure here, but it's mostly just kinda spooky sometimes but not actually very exciting. Especially when we're in the Ziggurat - it always feels like something's watching me.

Another day of super fun cataloging and stuff to go. Oh boy.

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 14th, 1989

This is getting so gosh darned annoying! Every night for the past three days I'm hearing the stupid Giant's Footfalls and freaking out, and Jake and Dad say it's nothing. And we get up and do all the boring stupid stuff again and again. I'm getting so sick of it! Today I just didn't even bother to go into the Ziggurat - I can't do that weird out-of-place feeling I get every time.

At least it's pretty out here. Especially when the twilight hits - I wish we'd brought color film instead of just the black & white stuff. It's so beautiful - the way that the clouds move and the colors mix together. Gold and purple, it looks like. I spent the whole evening just looking at it from the shelter of the tent and it was really nice.

I think we're gonna go back to base camp soon. Being out here for too long is a lot and it's been like a week now. Jake still wants to blast through those doors, but they'll have to go back to base to plan that out anyway. For now, it's just taking measurements and photographs and generally being boring old fuddy-duddies.





DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

April 11th, 1999

ADDENDUM: Based on the imagery included, I can confirm definitively that the documents herein refer specifically to the area around [REDACTED]. While this is obvious, I must again state that no such structure as the so-called "Ziggurat" exists! We have records of a mountain called [REDACTED] near that location, but it is quite thoroughly documented and there is no manmade structure anywhere!

Were the existence of human artifacts on the continent of Antarctica to be confirmed, it would radically alter our view of the history of humanity itself! Of course, that is perhaps the least fantastical aspect of all of these documents!

I did confer with Dave Strider in the Acoustics Research department, and he confirmed that the phenomenon known as "Giant's Footfalls" is in fact a real one. Take that for what it's worth, I suppose.

-Dr. Jade Harley
Project Lead, Project SunGlass

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 15th, 1989

We're going back to the base camp tomorrow morning. I guess Dad and Jake got everything they could for now and are getting sick of freezing our butts off in the temporary shelters. Better to freeze our butts off back at the main base!

I had a weird dream last night - I don't think I'm gonna bother to report it back to Crocker because that's just weird, but it was interesting. I was waking up in a city made out of gold - and in the dream I remember thinking that this was half the twilight down here. That doesn't make sense now, but it was so profound in the actual dream.

I was walking around the dream world and I think there were other people there too? I'm not sure - they just kinda looked like white shadows, if that makes sense. And that's all I could really remember. But I feel like next time I'll remember more

Why'd I even type that? That doesn't make sense.

I'm just so bored out here. I didn't hear the Footfalls last night at least, so that's something!

Just talked to Dad and he says we're definitely headed back in the morning!

March 16th, 1989

gutsyGunshoe [GG] began bothering timeusTestified [TT] at 19:24

GG: Hey, you still up?

TT: Jane it is six in the god-damn morning.

TT: That being said - yes, I'm up. What is it?

GG: You had any weird dreams lately?

TT: I dreamt I was imbuing the soul of my as-yet-nonexistent daughter into a toaster.

TT: So no, just normal stuff.

GG: Ha ha flipping ha, Dirk. You're such a jerk-face.

TT: You just trying to psychoanalyze my headspace or was there something else to this?

GG: I dunno. I feel weird after going out to the...

GG: I don't know that I'm supposed to talk about it.

TT: Okay, so you feel weird after going to the not-supposed-to-talk-about-it.

TT: What do you need from me?

GG: You ever get the feeling that maybe the Empire doesn't mean well?

TT: This feels like a dangerous line of conversation. What do you mean?

GG: Like, we've been told they came in and put an end to war and all that.

GG: I guess that's true but also... I don't know. I feel like there's more we're not being told.

TT: Sure. There's always more we're not being told. Layers inside of layers.

TT: A veritable Matryoshka of secrets that we're never meant to know.

1 TT: Is that something that bothers you?

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5 TT: I do recall you being something of a fan of the amateur sleuth genre of
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10 fiction.

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13 TT: Did Encyclopedia Brown put you up to this?

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16 GG: God you're such an absolute dick!

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19 TT: Dirk Strider, private dick - I solve the crimes the fuzz can't.

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22 GG: I'm being serious! It's weird here.

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25 TT: While your obfuscated references to your situational specificity are
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33 frustrating, I do catch your meaning.

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36 TT: I suppose I have entertained the idea that there's more to the Empire than
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TT: I suppose I have entertained the idea that there's more to the Empire than
meets the eye. But only in so much as there's always more to any government
than meets the eye.

TT: You've studied your history, Jane - you know that the governments of the
world have been secretive to a fault. Why should one from another world be any
different?

GG: I guess. But... I don't know. There's something going on with this place. I
can't really explain it but...

GG: Can you just tell me if you have any really strange dreams? I'm being
serious.

TT: Yeah, I suppose I can do that...

TT: Ms. Brown

GG: God you're insufferable!

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 16th, 1989

I wish I could find more information from the previous expedition! We didn't find any sign of them out at the Ziggurat at all. Which is weird... if they were trying to shelter from a storm or something, why not travel to the giant stone building? Why not just stay put? None of this stuff makes any sense at all!

Starting to go through all the places in the station I can think of to find the missing documents! I know they're out there - pages actually torn out of log books and big chunks of time missing. There's no way they were here for a dang year and didn't fill in their station logs!

I spent an hour digging through the storage boxes, but everything in there was just information about the preliminary expedition that established the camp. Nothing much in there, but there's also so much of it to go through. I guess I'll just settle in and read the dang logs. Dad said there's another storm rolling in so we'll be stuck at base camp for a couple days anyway.

Even if we weren't, I don't know that I want to go back out to the Ziggurat right now. It makes me nervous.

Jake's being shifty too - I think he's worried. I talked to him about the Giant's Footfalls and he got all evasive with me and wouldn't say anything more.

March 16th, 1989

gutsyGumshoe [GG] began bothering timeusTestified [TT] at 20:14

GG: You ever hear of Giant's Footfalls before?

GG: The phenomenon with ice cracking, I mean.

TT: "Ice cracking" is a reductive way to put it, but yes. I dated a researcher who was doing work with glaciers - he wouldn't shut up about how spooky it sounded.

GG: What does it sound like, exactly?

TT: I dunno - he played a recording once but it's not easy to record. Kind of a loud cracking or splitting noise, I guess.

GG: A booming, low sound? Like muffled thunder?

TT: No? Not really, I don't think. This have something to do with the not-supposed-to-talk-about-it, Jane?

GG: Maybe.

TT: Jane, where ARE you working these days, anyway? I called the university but they said you were on expedition but they wouldn't say where.

TT: And the fact you didn't know what time it was for me when we talked before - I'm assuming you're not in Washington anymore.

GG: I really can't talk about it!

TT: Look, you need to be careful, okay? I've got a weird feeling about all of this.

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 17th, 1989

I'm going to put these notes in a box or something where no one can find them. I have a spot to hide them and then I can put them all together and... I don't know, figure out what to do next. I know I don't feel comfortable with Crocker Corp seeing them. Not just yet, anyway. Not until I figure out what everything means.

I had a dream last night, and this time it was clear. Too clear. I've never been much able to remember my dreams, even as a kid, but this was so distinct it felt like I was living there. I was waking up and I was in a golden tower on a bed and then I was floating down over a golden city full of spires that just went up forever.

There were people there, but they didn't look human - more like white dolls or something? They were all looking up at me like they expected something specific from me. I don't know why, but it made me feel afraid.

The weird part though is I looked up at the clouds in the sky and they moved. And they weren't clouds, but they showed me pictures of things. Some stuff I recognized - the Ziggurat and the base camp and the room with the obelisk. And something specific about the obelisk, but that wasn't clear.

The thing is, I don't feel like it was a dream, if that makes any sense. And I feel like the Crocker Corporation knows more than it's letting on.

I don't know that I trust the others with this yet. Maybe Dad and Jake, but the rest of the crew... I don't know yet.

The storm is coming in and we'll be stuck here until it passes, then I think Jake wasnt to head back to the Ziggurat. I'll have to check the obelisk more carefully this time. Maybe there's something we all missed the first time.



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PROJECT SUNGLASS

April 12th, 1999

I'm not writing this down anywhere they can find it. They'll think I'm fucking crazy if they see it. I had the same dream last night!

I swear to god! I stopped reading through the files and I didn't see the last entry until this morning!

Whether or not they believe me doesn't matter! I know what I saw! I have to talk to... I don't know. To Rose, maybe? Dr. LaLonde... whatever. She might know better than me, with her history in parapsychology.

Whatever was in those clouds, I can't explain it. I know the rational explanation is "my brain made it up" but that doesn't feel right.

—Jade Harley

March 18th, 1989

gutsyGumshoe [GG] began bothering tipsyGnostalgia [TG] at 10:47

GG: I'm stuck inside until this storm passes!

GG: Be entertaining, Roxy! Entertain me!

TG: kk

TG: wat do u get when u cross uh

TG: a hors and a goose!

GG: I don't know, Roxy, what do you get?

TG: dunno, but it prolly shitz a hole lot! Lol

GG: Oh geez. How many PhDs do you have?

TG: 2 - but they arnt in fukin jokes binch!

GG: I'm sorry, I'm just freaking out because of the storm.

TG: storm? Binch wher r u at?

GG: Not supposed to say. Crocker Corp thing and all that.

TG: binch arnt u the next fukin crocker ceo or somethin?

GG: No, it's just a family name thing! My dad and I have a trust, but the whole corporation is controlled by the Board.

GG: Honestly I wonder about them sometimes. They said some weird stuff.

TG: teh dream stuf?

GG: Yeah, among other things.

GG: It's not important right now. I'm sorry, I should be vague like this.

GG: oh shoot brb

TG: janey? u good?

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14 GG: something happened
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Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 18th, 1989

One of the crew is missing. I don't know where or exactly when, but Dad came in when I was talking to Roxy and said that one of the surveyors - a man named Stevens - was gone and we needed to try to find him right away.

I don't know where the heck he would've gone to - the wind storm outside is really bad and there's no way anyone could be out in it for long. All the crawlers are still here, and I don't even know where they would've gone.

No, that's not true.

I think I do know where they went. There's no way in hell I'm going after though. Jake and Dad either - I won't let them do that.

We need to send a report back to Crocker Corp right away to let them know. Hopefully they'll send some help... or cancel this expedition completely.

I have such a bad feeling about all of this. Everything feels wrong about all of this.

Maybe the surveyor just smuggled in some booze and we'll find them sleeping it off tucked away in the generator room where it's warm.

Except we already looked there. We already looked everywhere.

I think I know where they are.

1 > START OF MESSAGE

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10 > FROM: DR JANE CROCKER

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13 > ATTN: CROCKER CORP EXPEDITION REVIEW BOARD

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17 > RE: MISSING PERSONNEL

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26 > A SURVEYOR IS MISSING (STEVENS EE#392201)

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30 > HE WAS LAST SEEN IN BASE CAMP

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34 > DISCOVERED MISSING AT AROUND 1100 HOURS

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38 > WE SEARCHED THE CAMP AND SURROUNDING AREA

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42 > NO SIGN OF SURVEYOR

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47 > WEATHER PREVENTS FURTHER SEARCH UNTIL TOMORROW

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51 > PLEASE ADVISE ON FURTHER ACTION AND PROVIDE ASSISTANCE

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58 > END OF MESSAGE

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2 > START OF MESSAGE
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10 > FROM: CROCKER CORP EXPEDITION REVIEW BOARD
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14 > ATTN: DR JANE CROCKER
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18 > RE: MISSING PERSONNEL
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26 > PRIORITIZE ARTIFACT COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION
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30 > NEW INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPING
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34 > USE EXTREME CAUTION
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38 > DO NOT DISCUSS WORK WITH OUTSIDE INFLUENCES
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46 > STAND BY FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS
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54 > END OF MESSAGE
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Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 19th, 1989

I guess it's good I didn't have the dreams again last night. I feel like they would've been different this time, and maybe not in a good way. We did everything we could and then I just... I guess I fell asleep at some point but I don't remember when.

We went out as soon as the storm cleared in the morning and started to look for Stevens. He must've wandered out of the camp, because we couldn't find any trace of him anywhere. His outside gear was missing, so he might've made it a little way before...

Well, I don't think he's out there anymore. Not alive, anyway. You can't survive for long out in the storms without shelter and he didn't take a crawler and none of the temporary shelters were taken out of inventory.

I still have that feeling creeping up inside of me that I know exactly where he went. It's twenty miles away - even in the crawlers it takes us more than two hours each way in good weather. In a storm like that we wouldn't even be able to make it - let alone on FOOT!

Dad and Jake are going back out there later today and camping over. I don't want to. I'm not going to go. Not this time. I'll stay back at base camp and see if I can find more logs from the '86-'87 expedition.



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

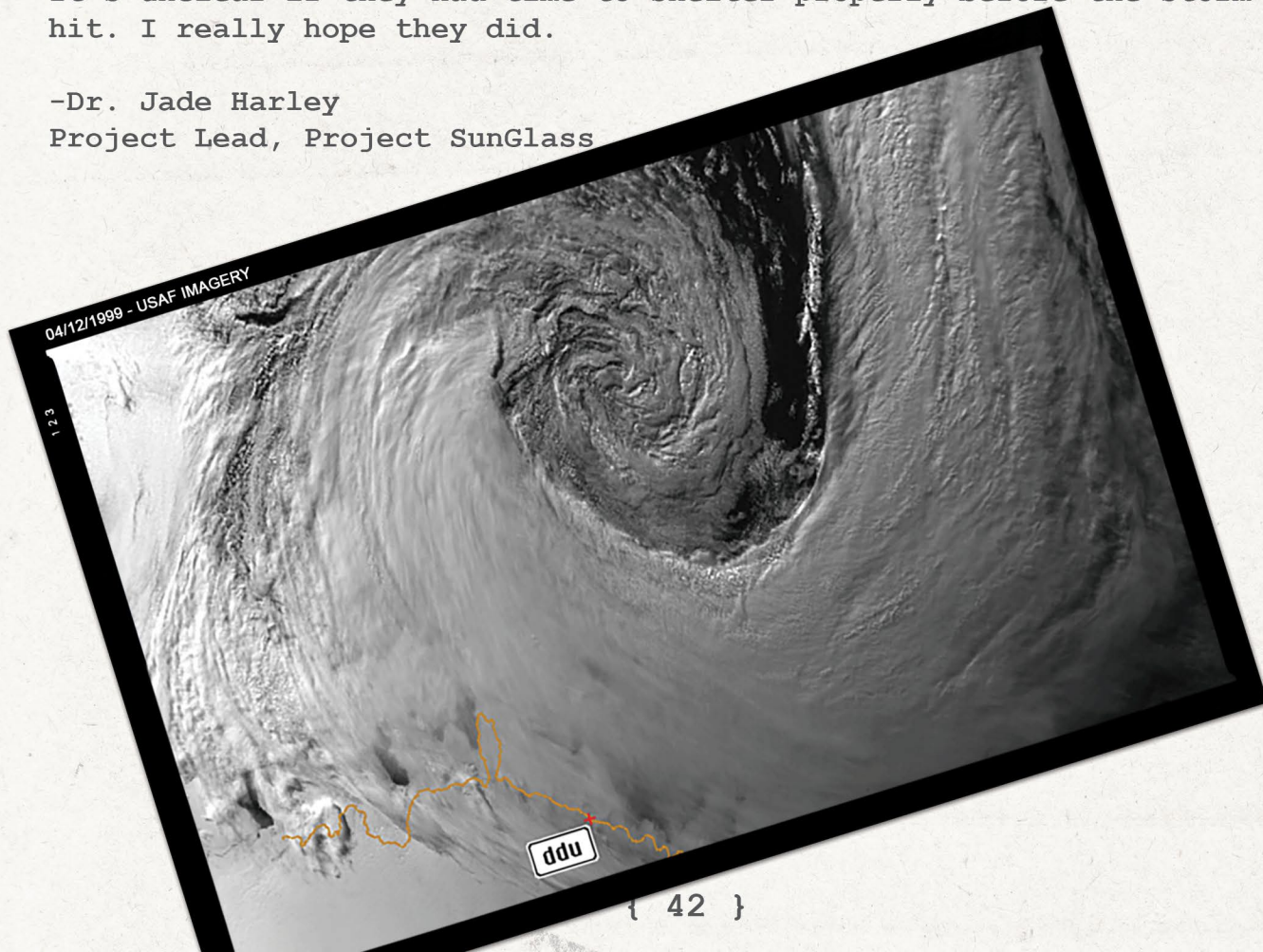
April 12th, 1999

ADDENDUM: We've lost contact with the expedition that originally recovered the container as of [REDACTED] hours this morning, local time. The expedition was supposed to continue to investigate the area around the site where the documents and sealed container were found in hopes of finding additional information.

According to weather satellites, a strange storm formed very suddenly in the vicinity of [REDACTED] and moved quickly inland, hitting the camp at [REDACTED] around [REDACTED] hours. We lost satellite communications almost immediately, and imagery shows that the camp was directly in the path of the storm.

It's unclear if they had time to shelter properly before the storm hit. I really hope they did.

-Dr. Jade Harley
Project Lead, Project SunGlass



Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD
March 19th, 1989

I found something in the logs from the 1987 expedition!

"January 17th: Discovered a large structure to the northeast of our position, approximately 32 km away. Expedition teams sent to investigate.

January 18th: Nothing to report.

January 19th: Nothing to report.

January 20th: Report back from expedition team - large structure of ancient origins.

January 21st: Nothing to report."

Then the pages are missing, but I found one last page from a while later:

"March 4th: Storm came up out of nowhere! We think it formed over the Ziggurat and moved southwest. Like the storm was aiming for us! I know it sounds crazy, but how much crazier can it sound after everything else we've seen? Pretty sure the expedition team at the Ziggurat is gone, unless they were able to get to shelter. We'll hunker down here and hope for the best. Our cartographer is already talking about trying to walk back to the Ziggurat and that's just completely insane. Right?"

That's all I could find, and it was tucked down inside of one of the log books. I'll keep looking - maybe there's something else.

March 21st, 1989

gutsyGunshoe [GG] began bothering timeusTestified [TT] at 12:14

GG: You know about storms and stuff, right? Oceanographer and all.

TT: Yeah, you could say I know a thing or two.

GG: Is it normal to get hit with large storms out of nowhere in Antarctica.

GG: Hypothetically.

TT: Hypothetically, Jane?

TT: At this time of year? Maybe once in a while.

GG: What about having several come through back to back?

TT: No, not really.

TT: Jane...

TT: I hate to ask this since it betrays the cool exterior I've so carefully cultivated...

TT: Are you okay?

GG: Honestly?

TT: That would be my preference for your answer, yeah.

GG: No, not at all.

GG: I'm freaking out. Things are weird down here and I don't know what to do.

And the Board's being weird. And I keep dreaming about this weird place with golden towers and I'm flying along and there's all these people everywhere!

TT: What did you just say?

TT: Don't respond, I can clearly read it - my question was purely rhetorical in nature, expressing my shock.

TT: Pushing past the assumption that you're in Antarctica for some reason, and the logical conclusion that it has something to do with the possibly-nefarious machinations of the Crocker Corporation Board of Directors and/or the Empire...

TT: Beyond all of that

TT: These are dreams that feel more real than the world we currently exist within?

TT: Like we're dreaming now, and only fully awake in that other world?

GG: Dirk?

GG: What the fuck?

TT: The only difference is that the city in my dreams isn't golden - it's what a poet might call "the deep shadows around twilight" or some equally verbose and poignant bullshit.

TT: Every night, it gets clearer. And I feel like I know there's something I'm supposed to do. Just can't quite figure it out yet.

GG: Holy crap Dirk this is serious.

TT: I'm not joking with you. Not even a little bit.

GG: Look, I've gotta go, okay?

TT: Be careful.

GG: What do you mean by that?

TT: I mean be careful. Make sure the Board doesn't see this conversation.

TT: Make sure they don't find out about your dreams.

GG: Dirk? What does that mean? You're freaking me out a little.

TT: Good. Do you trust anyone on the expedition with you?

GG: I mean, Jake for sure. Dad too.

1 TT: What about the rest of the crew?

2 GG: I dunno - they're all new to me. Dad too. I guess Crocker Corp hired them?

3 TT: Don't fucking talk to them!

4 GG: What the heck?

5 TT: I'm serious Jane. Don't talk to them. Clear the buffer on the terminal once
6 we're done talking.

7 GG: You gonna tell me what's going on, buster?

8 TT: Not right now. It's not safe for me to talk.

9 TT: You need to go now, right?

10 GG: I mean, I can stay for a bit...

11 TT: No. You need to go now.

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HE'S SUCH A DICK!!!

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 22nd, 1989

I saw the Obelisk in my dreams for the first time last night. There's something in the base of it - a certain way that you have to move pieces of it around and press just right and it'll open up a compartment. I know there's something inside.

I have no way of knowing this.

But I know it.

I'm scared about what Dirk said! I don't know if I can trust the other members of the crew. They're all scientists but... what does that actually MEAN to me? Scientists who work for Crocker Corp? I guess I'm a scientist who works for Crocker Corp too but... I dunno, it feels like something is about to happen.

I haven't seen Carter lately. He's the one who's in charge of the crawler maintenance and he's the only one who can fly a helicopter. Not that we HAVE a helicopter out here, but Penguin Point (I can't believe they called it that!) to the south does have one and that sure would be a big help to check out the Ziggurat. I think I'll send them a message on the terminal and see if maybe they could help us out.

I feel like I can talk to those people in my dreams, and they're trying to warn me about something? Someone? I'm not sure.

I heard the Giant's Footfalls coming from the direction of the Ziggurat this morning. I hope Dad and Jake are okay.

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 23rd, 1989

The crew from the Ziggurat got back today. They're fine, but they seem shaken up about something and Jake won't talk about it and Dad told me not to worry about it. I heard them arguing about another collapsed wall - whether to blow it up or not, I guess. Couldn't hear all the details.

I think I need to go out with them the next time. I asked Dad and he said they'll be going out again in a few days. I made sure he promised to take me with him this time. I need to see if the Obelisk actually has a secret compartment or not. If it does then... I don't know if I'm more afraid of it having that compartment, or it NOT having it.

I saw Carter hanging around the camp but when I asked him how he was doing, he got really weird and walked off without saying anything.

I talked to Gustav (the woman who runs the radio array) and told her my idea about getting in touch with Penguin Point for their helicopter. She said it was a good idea and she'd try to get them on the radio tomorrow.

March 23rd, 1989

gutsyGunshoe [GG] began bothering tipsyGnostalgia [TG] at 21:13

GG: Hey, Dirk's being weird and won't talk to me. Have you heard from him?

TG: uh janey

TG: hav u ben clering ur bufferz?

GG: Yes, Dirk said I should. Why?

TG: im worried abt u

TG: n stuf in general 2 i guess?

GG: Have you and Dirk been talking about me?

TG: u need to watch it gurl!

TG: croker corp is bad fukin news!

GG: Roxy?

GG: Have you been having the same dreams?

TG: sumthin is happening binch

TG: we need to watch r buttz janey

GG: You didn't answer my question.

TG: god

TG: yes

TG: same as dirk

TG: i gtlg

TG: srsly stay saef

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 24th, 1989

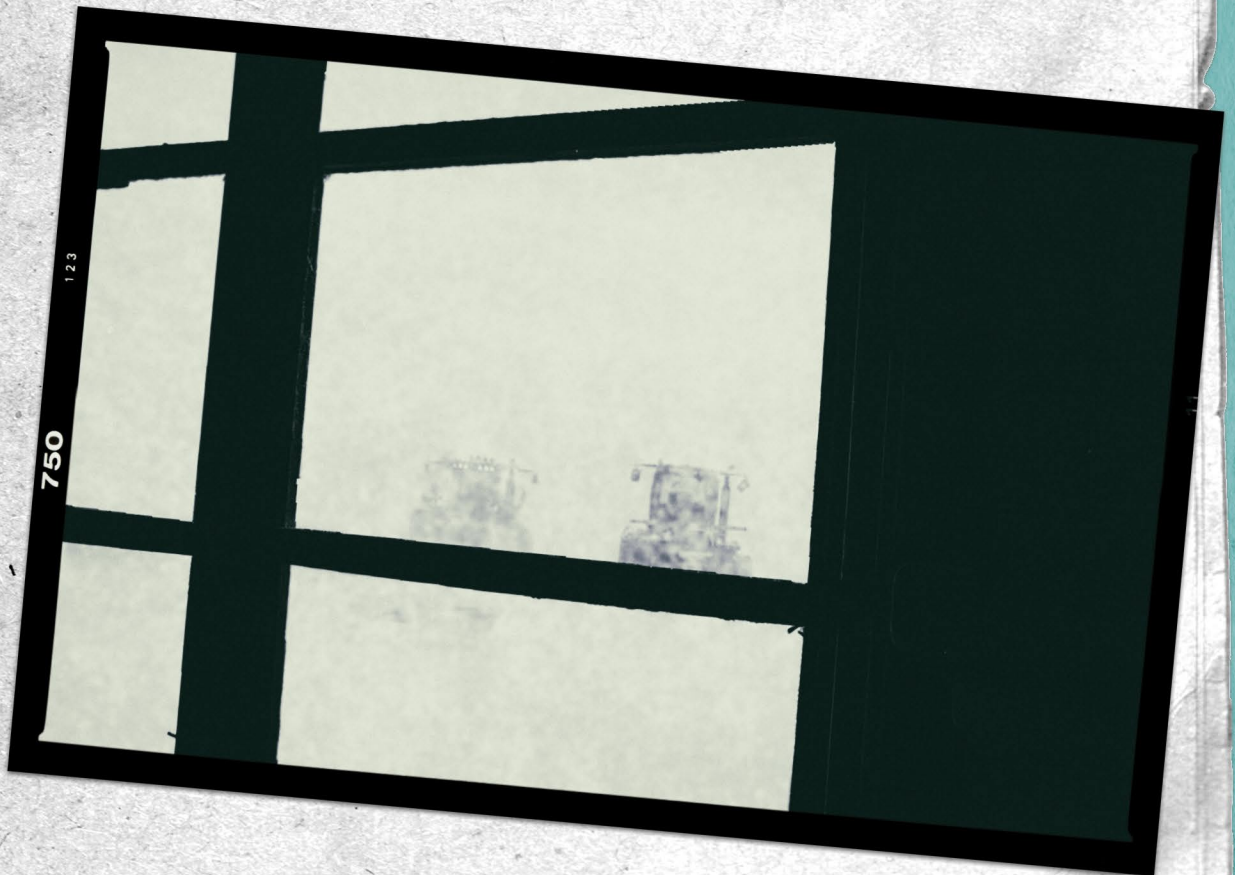
Another storm came in overnight and our radio is down! Gustav said she can't go out until the storm passes, so we're stuck in here again. I lost track of Carter again - he's been acting really weird lately and I'm worried. I want to say something to Dad but then he might say something to Carter and... I don't know, I feel like that might be a bad thing.

I'm hiding all of these letters away where I know they won't look - I've got a lockbox and I can hide that too.

As soon as this storm clears, I'm going out to the Ziggurat.

I can hear the sounds more and more now, but I don't think they're ice cracking.

Honestly, I never did.





DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PROJECT SUNGLASS

April 12th, 1999

ADDENDUM: Comms received a transmission from the expedition that recovered the box. It's mostly unintelligible - they passed it through a relay and it got caught up in the transmission buffer before we were able to recover it. Mostly corrupted.

But they talk about hearing something moving around outside. Something big that they can't see in the storm. Something that they were afraid of. Most of the expedition was out at a forward camp when the storm hit, but they still had a few people back in the base camp. They were going to hold fast until they could re-establish contact with the other members of the crew. The boss is talking about sending down a recovery team and I don't think she likes the odds of them being still alive.

I'm meeting with some colleagues later to discuss these matters in more detail. My official report will be filed before 5 pm Eastern time today.

-Dr. Jade Harley
Project Lead, Project SunGlass



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

I'm talking to Rose, June, and Dave in an hour. Thank god we all work in the same building. Rose contacted me this morning to ask if I had a very specific kind of dream and... god damn.

I asked June and Dave about it as casually as I could and Dave laughed it off but June got really nervous. And then they both told me they'd had the same kind of vivid dream last night. Which also matches EXACTLY what's written in the notes I've been reading and there's no fucking WAY that's a coincidence.

I'm gonna keep reading and talk to them in a couple hours. This shit just keeps getting weirder and weirder!

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 26th, 1989

Everything was so eerily still when we got to the secondary camp. One of the tents got tossed by the storm and it's a loss, but we had another one in the crawler to put up instead. First day we got there as twilight was falling, so we didn't go into the Ziggurat. Second day we went inside and looked around. They've set up lights and marked a lot of stuff off to document and examine.

I still think it's so weird that there's no kind of decoration or carving in here, outside of the markings on the Obelisk.

I waited for a minute when I could slip away from the rest and went in to check it. I followed the instructions from my dreams.

There was a small compartment in the base of the Obelisk, hidden away behind a clever mechanism made of a strange metal that looked dull and ancient, but it worked as if it were brand-new.

I found something inside.

I don't know what to do with it. I'm scared.

what do these do?!

why were these here?!

[illegible]

SBurb
Card 2

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 27th, 1989

The dreams were so much clearer last night. I talked to the people there, but I don't quite remember what they said. It was important though - they were getting ready for something. Preparing. It was important, and I was a big part of it.

When I woke up, I heard that massive thing in the distance again, but closer this time. I still don't know what it is, but I'm 100% sure it's not freaking ICE cracking. That's crazy. Giant's Footfalls... I think it's a LITERAL gosh-darn giant at this point!

Jake's been acting weird, like he hasn't been sleeping well. And I want to ask him if he's also having dreams. The same dreams. I asked him if he slept okay and he got really quiet and wouldn't answer. He can be so darn wishy-washy sometimes! I don't know that I should ask him directly or not - I don't know that he'll believe me.

These cards are just sitting in a folder with my other stuff and I don't know what to make of them. I didn't tell the others I found them. I think they were left by the other expedition - maybe? That feels wrong somehow - feels like they've been here for longer. I don't know how that would even work - the last expedition was the first one down here as far as I know. There's no mention of the Ziggurat before and it's not exactly something that's easy to hide!



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

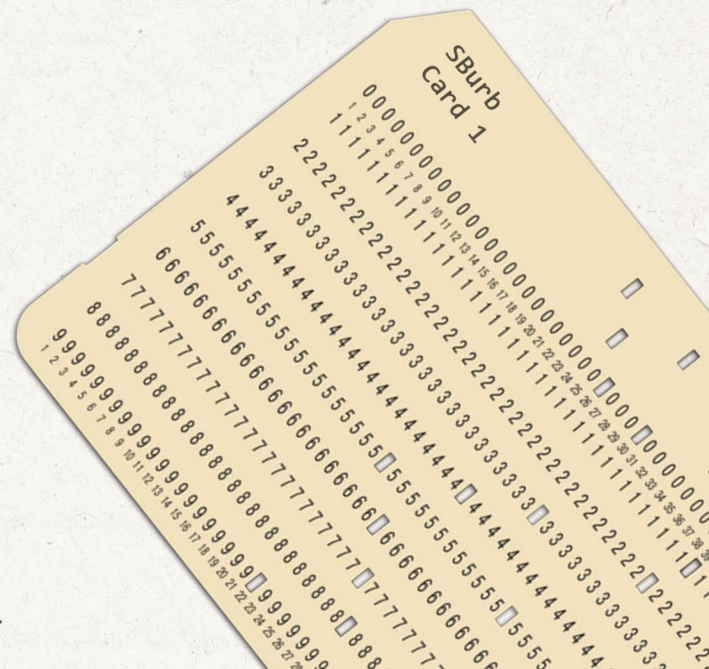
April 12th, 1999

ADDENDUM: Please note that supplementary materials referred to as a set of punch cards wasn't included with this file. At this point the entries become repetitive and refer to much of the same things. I think it would be unnecessary to review every single piece of media and writing included to determine that this is, in all likelihood, an elaborate joke set up by a previous expedition to the area.

How they precisely managed to fool our own team remains unknown, but it is unimportant. The fact of the matter remains that there is zero evidence of any of the events recorded therein ever having happened.

I am aware that the findings of Project [REDACTED] might suggest other possibilities, but I remain skeptical that the [REDACTED] technology was sufficiently advanced in the 1980s to enable [REDACTED]. This is a purely academic discussion best relegated to the lunch rooms and water coolers.

-Dr. Jade Harley
Project Lead, Project SunGlass



Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD
March 28th, 1989

I saw Jake in the dream last night. He was awake, but he looked confused. I tried to talk to him, but he flew off before I got a chance to actually say anything. He was dressed like I was - in golden clothing that shone in the light.

I haven't seen Dirk or Roxy, but they described something different. The city of shadowed spires. I feel like they're linked somehow.

The clouds keep moving and shifting, like they're showing me things. A fire that consumes everything - and a fire that consumes just a few things, but important ones. A shadow that towers over everything.

The sound of the Giant's Footfalls woke me up this morning.

I finally went to Jake and asked him straight up if he'd been dreaming about a city of golden towers and he got all pale and mumbled something about not knowing what I meant. But the way he looked at me, I knew he was full of crap.

He's dreaming of the same place. He's... existing in the same place as me when we sleep. I guess? I don't know how it works, exactly, but it all feels important.

We'll be heading back soon - within a few days, I think? I have the strangest feeling about that...

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 29th, 1989

Jake has been arguing with Riley about blasting through to a secondary chamber that Jake thinks is there. Riley says she thinks it's a bad idea, Jake thinks it's a great idea. Blah blah blah they keep going back and forth on this. They're wasting a whole day arguing.

Dad is trying to stay out of it, but I feel like he's nervous about something else. He keeps looking around as if something is watching us.

Giant's Footfalls again last night. Every single night now. And I swear I heard them during the day this time! I can't wait to get out of here and go back to base camp.

I keep wondering what the punch cards do. We have a reader back in the base camp, but what program would they even be for?

Or would I just plug them in and... something would happen?

It feels silly to even suggest it, but at the same time I don't think it is.

I'm going to try to talk to Jake in my dreams again - maybe now that he knows I'm aware of it, he'll actually respond and not run off!



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

I talked to the others — I know I said I'd provide a report to the Director. I'm going to tell him I think it's all a bunch of nonsense. I know he thinks it's related to SunGlass and what it's trying to do with the energy source but...

I don't know. It might be true.

They're all having dreams about the same place. More or less. Rose and Dave dream about a city of shadows, and June and I dream about a city of light. But they're so similar they sound like mirrors of each other.

I don't know what those dreams MEAN yet, but it can't just be some coincidence.

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

March 31st, 1989

We spent all day yesterday putting things in place to blast into the new chamber. I was working so hard that when I passed out at night I didn't even dream.

This morning, we blasted into a new chamber. And... hoo boy it's something else. The ceiling is high and vaulted and it's in better shape than the outer chambers. But it's weird - it has this strange lighting and there's a set of four pedestals and each of them is lit up somehow.

Even after thousands of years. Dad says it's probably bioluminescent lighting - some kind of bacteria or algae that's survived down here that gives off that faint light. I'm not sure that's true.

Two pedestals lit in gold, two in a deep violet.

I saw Jake's face when he saw it and I could tell he was thinking the same thing. Maybe not exactly since he doesn't know about Dirk and Roxy's dreams yet. We need to talk about this and we need to talk about it soon!

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 1st, 1989

We left to go back to base camp today. Back at camp, Carter keeps disappearing somewhere again. No clue where, but he's always back for his shifts making dinner and stuff. I think the cold and the isolation is getting to him more than the rest of us.

Normally I'd play an April Fool's joke on Jake and Dad but... something about it just doesn't feel right at the moment. Especially after what happened on the trip to the base camp.

On our way back, I thought I saw something in the distance, just around the mountain by the Ziggurat. I took a photo and

I don't know what Jake would say, or Dad. That it's a trick of the light? But I know what I saw - a shadow that stretches up above the mountain itself. Something in the distance that moves with a heavy step...



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2 April 1st, 1989
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6 tipsyGnostalgiaC [TG] began bothering gutsyGumshoe [GG] at 17:11
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14 TG: yo janey wut the fuck?!!!!?
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18 GG: What?
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22 TG: i ben talkin 2 dirk n he said stuf abt giants n shit
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26 GG: The Giant's Footfalls? Uh... yes?
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30 TG: yo i herd that shit at the fukin dam
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34 TG: teh damn dam
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38 GG: Oh shit, Roxy - are you okay?!
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42 TG: wut?
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46 TG: yeh, y? heard it iz alllll, wats up?
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50 GG: I found some weird fucking punch cards and Jake's having the dreams too but
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52 he's lying about it and I think something was
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54 following us. Something BIG.
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58 TG: thaz a looooooot!
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62 TG: u shuld talk 2 jakey!
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66 TG: cept hed prolly say liek "STARS AND GARTERS" n thatd be
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Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 2nd, 1989

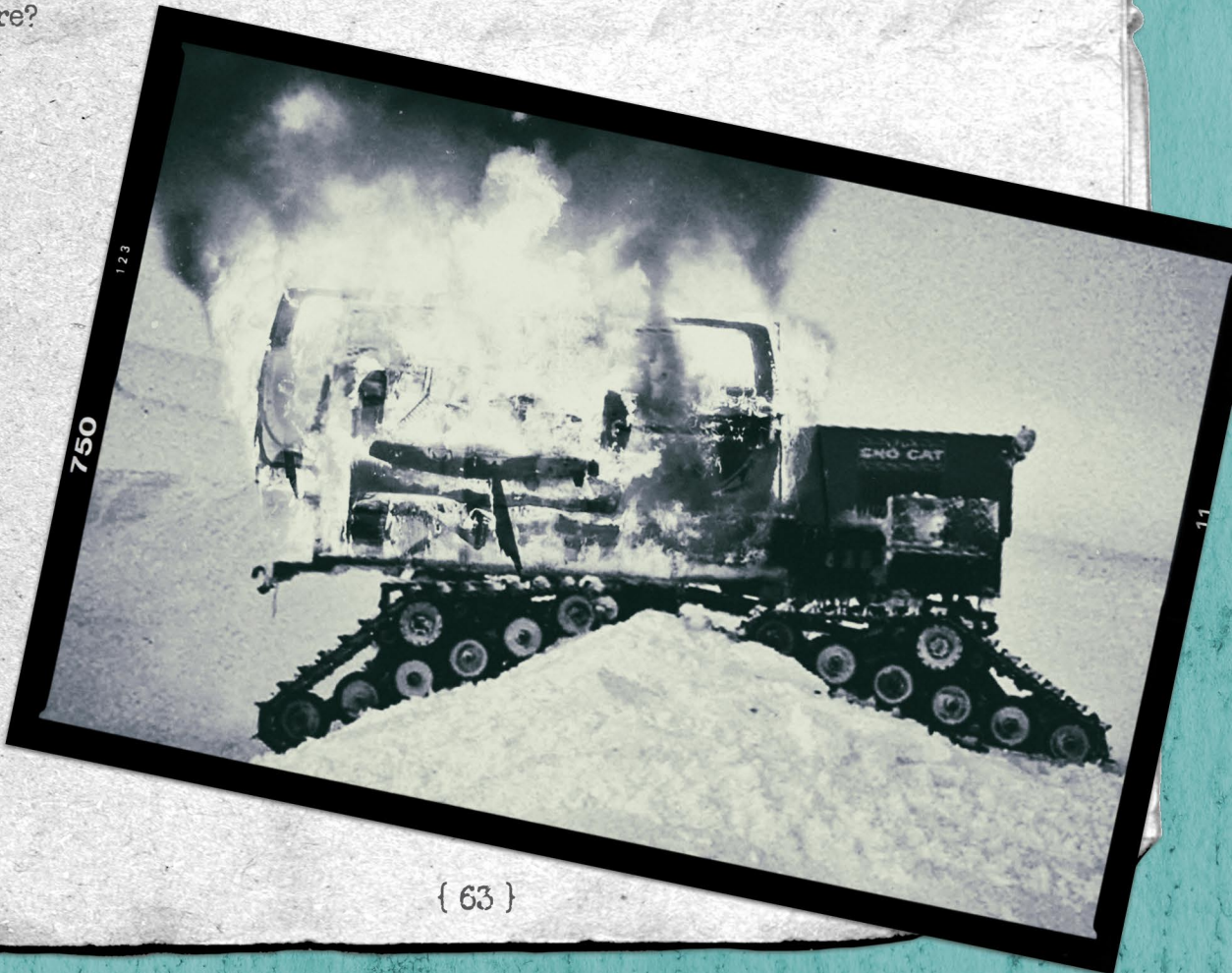
He burned all of them! Every single one of the crawlers!

I woke up this morning to the sound of someone screaming and we ran outside to see all of the crawlers - all four of the big ones and the smaller one too - on fire. I don't know how he managed to do it, but he sent them all up before we could even get out of the damn bed.

It was Carter. The only one we can't find. Outdoor gear and a shelter are missing - Jake thinks he might've gone out to hide.

But why? Why do any of this? Without the crawlers we'll have to wait for Penguin Point to send help back. And of course we've got another gosh-darn storm rolling in to take our radio coms down again!

I'm scared! I'm so freaking scared! What if he's out there? What if this was part of some sick plan to kill all of us? I know it sounds ridiculous, but why? Why is it any more ridiculous than setting all of our transportation on fire?



Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 3rd, 1989

We found Stevens. One of the fires from the crawlers melted the snow pack nearby and there he was.

There was so much blood.

He didn't run off. Maybe he found out something Carter was doing. Why is he doing any of this?



AltUniverseWash

Palace of Cold and Silence

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD
April 3rd, 1989

I found something else... I think I'm gonna be sick...

It was sitting at the bottom of a trash can and it got knocked over during everything with the body and everyone running around.

Gonna be sick

STAN.

MESSAGE

> 3/15/1989

> FROM: CROCKER CORP EXPEDITION

> ATTN: CARTER

> RE: DIRECTIVES

NEW BOARD

> ENSURE CREW STAYS ON SITE

> ENSURE FURTHER COLLECTION OF ARTIFACTS

> SURVEILLANCE MUST BE MAINTAINED

> DISCRETION IF DISCOVERED

> BURN AFTER READING

1 April 3rd, 1989

2 gutsyGunshoe [GG] began bothering timeusTestified [TT] at 18:34

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13 GG: Are you working on a Crocker Corp project right now?

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17 TT: I suppose operational security and confidentiality are more guidelines than
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GG: Dirk I'm fucking serious.

TT: Holy shit was that a Jane Crocker thermonuclear f-bomb?

TT: Okay, fine - I'm working on a deep ocean study for them.

GG: Be careful at work. And in general. Something's really wrong.

TT: Wrong in what sense of the word? Existentially? You do realize we grew up
in the shadow of a semi-benevolent alien invasion, right?

TT: A little corporate messiness is just the nuclear-red cherry on top of that
particular sundae.

GG: Dirk one of the crew is dead and the one who killed him is hiding out
god-knows-where.

GG: I found a corporate directive telling him to spy on us.

TT: Well god fucking damn.

GG: Yeah.

GG: Please be careful, okay?

GG: I gotta go.

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 4th, 1989

It's not like we have a lot of weapons. We've got one rifle and a couple pistols that Jake brought. Dad's got a revolver too. So we set up a watch schedule and rotated out so that everyone could get some sleep and everyone would help keep an eye out for Carter.

I'm trying to see if he reported anything back to the Board. I wonder if he took the logs from the previous expedition. He must've been working under the Board's directives from the beginning. That fucker.

We tried to call Penguin Point and let them know what happened but no one was responding. I'll bet my bottom dollar that the Board is refusing to respond. So we're stuck here until... what? We get all the artifacts from the Ziggurat? We can't even get out there with the crawlers destroyed. I don't think Carter was exactly thinking this plan through.

If the Board has instructed them to stay radio silent, we'll be stuck until winter clears! The base camp has enough supplies and generator fuel to last the entire winter, but who the heck knows what Carter's planning to do. We checked supplies and he took a bunch of food and enough gear to stay out there for a couple weeks. After that... I don't know what his plan is. He already burned the crawlers and we know it was him.

I don't want to know what'll happen when he comes back. Hopefully we see him first.

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2 April 5th, 1989
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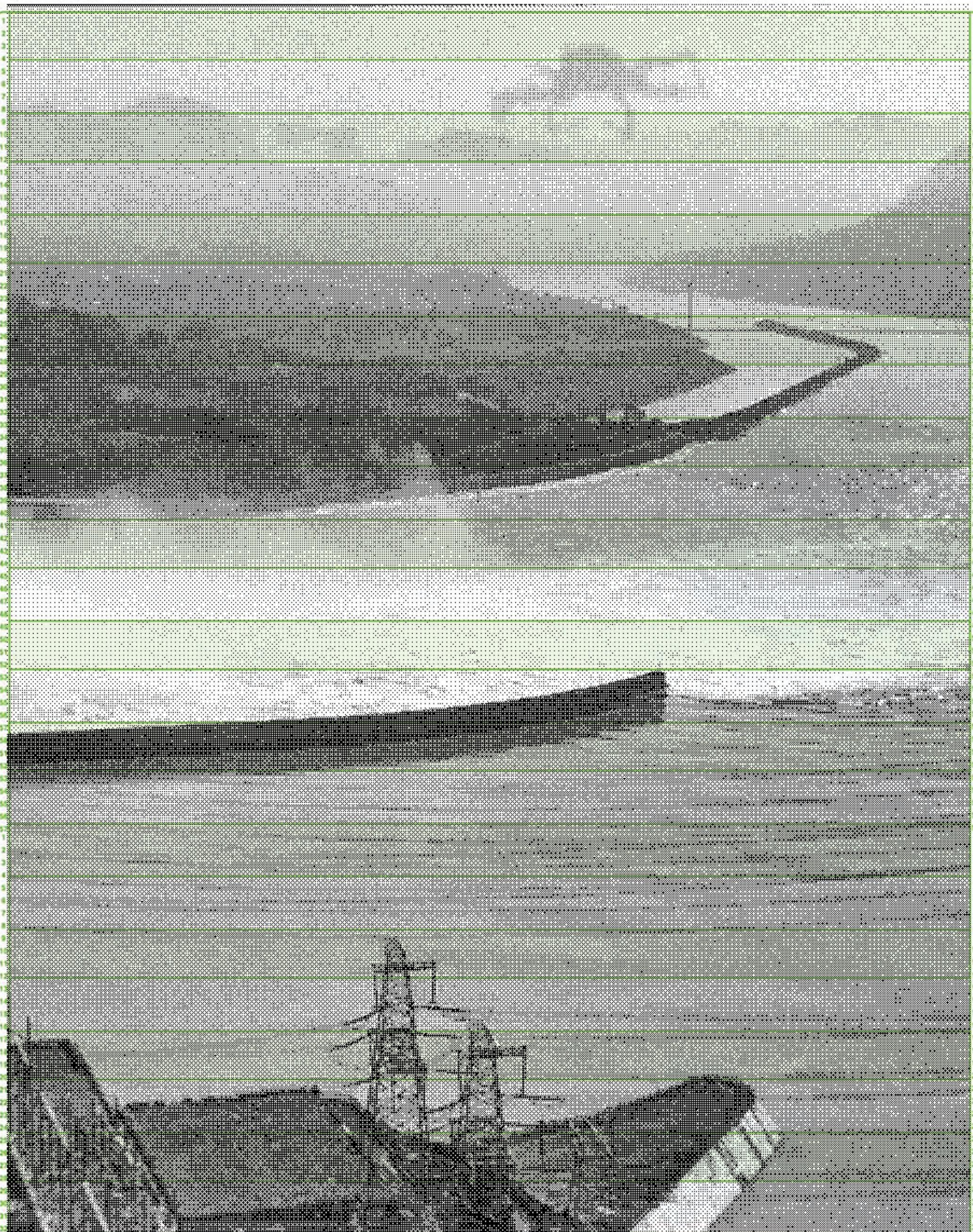
6 tipsyGnostalgiaac [TG] began bothering gutsyGumshoe [GG] at 11:01
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14 TG: wat the shit is this?
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18 TG: I stg i saw this
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30 tipsyGnostalgiaac [TG] sent photo to gutsyGumshoe [GG] at 11:02
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1
2 GG: Holy god.
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6 GG: It's the same as what I saw.
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9
10 TG: i looked down and then it waz gone
11
12

13
14 TG: but it wuz real!
15
16

17
18 GG: I know. I saw the same thing above the mountains.
19
20

21
22 GG: I don't know what it is.
23
24

25
26 GG: But I've been hearing it moving around.
27
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29
30 GG: God Roxy everything's gone to heck down here.
31
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34 GG: All our crawlers were burned and the man who did it murdered one of our
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Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 6th, 1989

I spent the night on watch and slept during the day. Carter's out there - I know he's out there. Dad's been walking the perimeter himself a lot. I think he blames himself for what happened to Stevens. I wish he'd stop going out along the edges, especially at night. No more directives have come over the line from the Board. Nobody from Penguin Point has tried to get through on the radio.

I can hear it at night - that thing I saw before. I don't care what anyone says about it being a trick of the gosh-darn light! It's far away, but it's getting closer.

Everything's out there in the darkness. Carter. The shadow. The Board. The Empire. I was always told they had come to save humanity from ourselves. But they're the ones that want whatever secrets this place holds.

I'm keeping the punch cards. I wonder if I should run them through the card reader and see what happens. Probably nothing.

No, I don't believe that.

Not anymore.

1 April 7th, 1989

2 gutsyGunshoe [GG] began bothering timeusTestified [TT] at 21:45

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14 GG: Dirk, I need to talk to you and I need you to keep it a secret.

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17 GG: Can you do that for me?

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22 TT: I've never been especially known for my loquacious nature, at least outside
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28 of the confines of inter-personal conversation.

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32 GG: Dirk I'm serious about this, you can't say anything.

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44 TT: You have my word. Under whatever creed or code I subscribe to that makes
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GG: How about because you're my dang friend.

TT: Yes. That'll work.

GG: There's something out there and it's coming for us. The man who killed one
of our surveyors is still hiding somewhere nearby and no one's going to look
for him because he burned all our crawlers.

GG: We are in deep here.

TT: Up the proverbial shit creek with nary a paddle?

GG: Have you had more of the dreams?

TT: Yes. Increasingly vivid in their clarity and more direct in their purpose. I
feel like the path is setting itself before us.

TT: Those punch cards, they're important.

GG: Wait, I told you about those cards?

TT: No.

GG: Roxy?

TT: No, Jane. I saw them in my dreams. Just... sitting there.

GG: Look, I need to get the heck off this continent! I need me and Jake and Dad to get out of here before some corporate-sponsored killer finds us!

TT: I think you're under-estimating how important all of this is.

TT: I was down on the Gulf two days ago and there was something big underwater. Some impossibly huge shadowed creature that moved in ways I couldn't describe.

TT: And then it was just gone. Probably retreated to whatever unfathomable depths it arose from in the first place.

TT: But it's coming back, Jane.

TT: I can hear these things out there - out beyond the shadowed streets I dream of. They're beings that aren't fully of one world or the other. And something's drawing them in. Closer and closer now.

GG: I know it's gonna sound completely bonkers, but I think you and Roxy and me and Jake are all connected to this. Inside the Ziggurat there were four pedestals and they were lit in purple and gold. Bioluminescence or something.

TT: Jane, bioluminescence doesn't work like that.

GG: Well they were gosh-darn sure as heck glowing! After thousands of years!

TT: Jane, we need to get ready.

GG: For what?

TT: For whatever's coming.

GG: God if only I

TT: Jane? What's the matter?

GG: Sorry, mashed the key. Though I heard som

he fucking killed dad! i heard something and i went to see because i wasn't on guard duty but it was too late already

just bashed his head in with something i guess? i don't know! it all happened so goddamn fast and then he was gone into the dark again and jake was after him with his pistols.

Jake's been gone for a while now. I heard gunshots earlier but I don't know if he's okay. God I can't lose my friend and my Dad on the same goddamn day!

He's back. He says he hit Carter at least once but he can't track him at night. Jake took some photographs to document what happened and then we moved him to one of the storage rooms with Stevens.

I'm so tired right now. I'm so tired.





DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PROJECT SUNGLASS

April 12th, 1999

ADDENDUM: I am officially submitting my report of findings related to this file.

I have found no compelling evidence that any of the details within can be substantiated in any way. Events are described which objectively cannot have occurred. World events described vastly differ from our own.

I am forwarding the enclosed to Dr. [REDACTED] at Project [REDACTED] for analysis. If she can't make heads or tails of it, that's fine. Another mystery we'll never solve. I'm getting used to that.

-Dr. Jade Harley
Project Lead, Project SunGlass



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PROJECT SUNGLASS

I fell asleep at my desk before I went home and I saw the clouds again. I know what I need to do now.

Whatever that thing is in the shadows, I know it's out there.

1 April 8th, 1989

2 gutsyGumshoe [GG] began bothering tipsyGnostalgia [TG] at 15:11

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13 GG: He's dead, Roxy. Dad's dead.

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17 TG: omg! wat happened?

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21 GG: Carter killed him, Roxy! Carter goddamn killed him!

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25 GG: We're getting another storm and I hope it kills him.

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29 GG: I hope he freezes to death out there. Or that Jake killed him!

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33 TG: whos carter? rox what happened?

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37 GG: It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter anymore. I keep seeing that we're sup-
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41 posed to be doing something at night but it doesn't even matter.

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45 GG: None of it matters because he's gone!

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49 TG: roxxy u gotta pull ur shit togethr gurrl

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53 TG: rite now

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57 TG: u kno the empire's keying up to some shit

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61 TG: Crocker Corp just put out a weird memo about u

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63
64
65 GG: WHAT?!

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69 TG: ill forward 2 u

1
2
3 > START OF MESSAGE
4

5
6
7 > 4/8/1989
8

9
10
11 > FROM: CROCKER CORP BOARD OF DIRECTORS
12

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14
15 > ATTN: ALL CROCKER CORP PERSONNEL
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17
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19 > RE: SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS
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26 > SUBVERSIVE PERSONS HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED WITHIN CROCKER CORP
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31 > PLEASE REPORT CONTACT WITH THE FOLLOWING
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38 > DR JAMES CROCKER
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43 > DR JANE CROCKER
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47 > JAKE ENGLISH, PE
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54 > THESE PARTIES ARE TO BE CONSIDERED HIGH THREAT
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59 > DO NOT ENGAGE
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> END OF MESSAGE

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 9th, 1989

I finally cornered Jake and asked him straight up about everything. After Dad died I guess he kind of deflated because he told me he'd been having the same dreams. He'd been seeing the same pictures in the clouds that looked like they told him things that hadn't happened yet but that WILL definitely happen.

He said that he saw the same shadowed figure in the distance when we were leaving the Ziggurat.

The storm is coming in hard and we're trapped here again. The others are all freaking out, but they seem more confused than anything else. They don't know why this is happening.

Jake does. Just like me.

I told him that I was gonna put in the punch cards and see what happened and he looked scared but he didn't say anything. Once the weather lets up.

I think I can hear the sound of that looming shadow moving closer.

I'm so afraid now.

1
2 April 10th, 1989
3
4

5
6 timeusTestified [TT] began bothering gutsyGumshoe [GG] at 22:15
7
8

9
10 CONNECTION INTERMITTENT - PACKET ERRORS
11
12
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17
18 TT: Yo Jane w#at ##e actual f###?
19
20

21
22 TT: You w##na tell me wh# there ##re fucking Imperial s###ie#s showing up
23
24

25
26 lo#k##g for me at wo##?
27
28

29
30 TT: I#m at a li###e hid#out I have just for th#s kind of thing but I don't know
31
32

33
34 how long it'll take them to fi## this place.
35
36

37
38 TT: T#at memo t## Board sent o#t and ##### this?
39
40

41
42 TT: Jane w##t the fuck is happening?
43
44

45
46 GG: Dirk, stay by the computer as much as you can.
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50 GG: I'll contact you once the weather clears!
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Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 11th, 1989

I heard it at night again and then in the morning when the storm lifted we found...

I don't think we'll have to worry about Carter anymore.

The crew is talking about trying for the Ziggurat with a portable radio and hunker down and wait for a rescue team. That's a three day hike, easy. They don't know about the Board's directive.

No one is coming to rescue us.

Just like the others.



Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD
April 12th, 1989

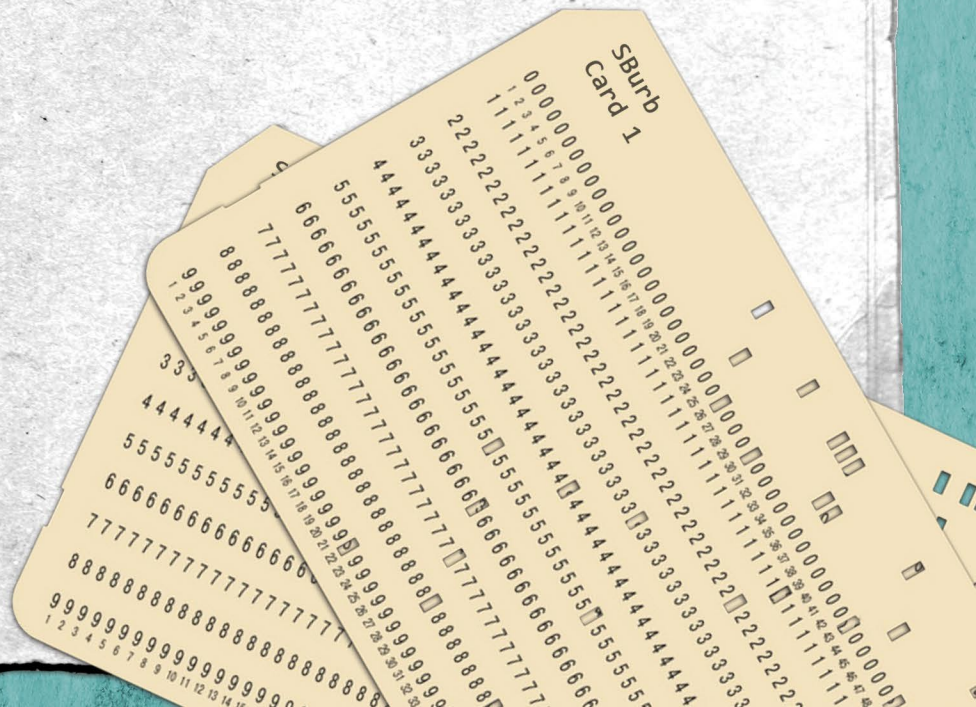
It was quiet today - as if everything was holding its breath. We didn't even bother to try to scoop up what was left of Carter. I think it was Carter. The others are all terrified, but I don't think they understand what's out there waiting for us.

It's here now - or it's very close. I don't know for sure yet, but this is going to be our last chance. Tonight I'm finally putting the cards in the reader and we'll see what happens. Worst case? Everything stays the same and we'll probably all be dead. Not just me and the crew either. I think this same thing is coming for Dirk and Roxy.

How do I know all of this? Those clouds in my dreams show me so much. I should think I'm going mad from the isolation and the cold but... I know that's not it. I've had a month and a half to sit with this. I've seen some truly mind-boggling things and darn it all if none of this makes a darn lick of sense.

What do I have to lose? A few hours waiting for this impossible thing to destroy us? Waiting for its shadowed footfalls to come claim us?

I'd rather not.



Connected...

Welcome to

S'BURBSM

(The SM means that S'Burb is a Service Mark of the S'Burb Wizards)

To connect to your existing character, type "connect <name> <password>".

To receive a new character, please think strongly on your earliest memory.

To see the latest news, consider your existential place in the world.

To disconnect from a character, simply die.

Use the WHO command to find out who is currently online.

Use the 'serverplayer' command to find your server player.

Use the 'clientplayer' command to find your client player.

Use the 'seerview' command to see a raster display of your current view.

Use the 'help' command to see a basic guide to commands.

All users of S'Burb are bound by the laws of causality.

Connected to client player 'DIRK STRIDER'

DIRK is sitting alone in a computer chair at a desk. The desk has an IBM PC and monitor on it, along with several small nick-nacks. In one corner of the room is a bed, and various posters line the walls.

"What the fuck?" Dirk asks as he looks at his computer screen. He has suddenly realized that the S'Burb(SM) client/server application has been installed via network.

"What's happening? Jane?"

>say "Dirk, can you see this?"

Dirk squints at the screen and shakes his head.

"Yeah, but what IS this?"

>say "I'm not sure. I put a punch card in the reader and this just kind of happened?"

Dirk turns to look out the window.

"Jane, what's happening?"

>say "I don't know! I don't even know how this is possible!"

"I think we're a little bit past that."

Dirk stands up from the desk and glances around the room. He sits back down again.

"Do you have any idea what we're supposed to be doing here?"

>help

==== WELCOME TO THE S'BURB MULTIUSER EXPERIENCE (SMUX)! ===

You have been selected for a one-of-a-kind online multi-user connective gaming experience!

Similarly to other popular text-based adventure games, you can use the command prompt to enter various commands.

Please be aware that commands can and will alter the fabric of reality itself!

Please be aware that you are bound by the laws of causality while engaging in this experience. Violating causal principles may result in unpredictable game behavior!

Type help -commands for a list of available commands!

==== ENJOY YOUR SMUX EXPERIENCE ===

>say "What the heck?"

"I don't know, Jane. But... I think I'm connected to Roxy. Hold on."

Dirk glares at his screen.

"Yeah, definitely. She says 'what's up, fuckers?'"

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 13th, 1989

The game... the thing? S'Burb? SMUX? Whatever it is keeps dropping hints about what to do when we use it. But the thing is, and I know this is gonna sound crazy - it can change things in the real world! Move things around - make things. The hints keep saying that I need to make certain things with weird made-up names.

I'm controlling Dirk's environment, he's controlling Roxy's, Roxy's controlling mine. I got Jake to tell him what was going on, so he's here with me.

I can hear that thing in the distance, and I'm sure the shadow over Roxy's dam and the thing lurking under the water in the Gulf of Mexico are moving too now. Something about all this is related.

I'm gonna keep writing these as long as I can. Who knows - maybe it'll matter some day.

GRIST: When alchemizing certain items grist is important. Grist can be obtained by defeating some of the creatures that come from your gates, or through the destruction of other objects.

---- ENJOY YOUR SMUX EXPERIENCE ----

Dirk grimaces.

"I still can't believe that this can just... create stuff out of nowhere."

>say "You say it for yourself, buster!"

"I know - I didn't say I don't believe it, just that I can't."

>say "That doesn't make sense, Dirk."

"Hold up..."

Dirk looks outside the window and sees something coming in at high speed nearby. It appears to be a meteorite of some kind.

>say "What the heck is happening?!"

Dirk runs to the computer as the sound of the meteorite striking in the distance is heard.

"Oh shit. There's a bunch of stuff hitting the fucking ground around here."

---- HELPFUL S'BURB HINTS ----

Meteorites will continue to fall until players move through their gates or until the Earth is destroyed!

---- ENJOY YOUR SMUX EXPERIENCE ----

>say "Well shit."

"Yeah, Jane, I'd say that about covers it. We gotta get this shit into gear."



Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 13th, 1989

A bunch of meteorites hit nearby and I can see that thing in the distance!
It's there - it's coming for us!

The others are panicking. Gustav convinced them to try for the Ziggurat.
I think they're all going except for Jake and I. They think that if they
move quickly and quietly they can avoid that thing out there. It's coming
right for the base camp.

We need to get through the gates and we need to do it fast.



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

4/13/1999

I found an old punch card reader in storage and I wasn't sure what to expect but...

It's the same. Exactly the same. As soon as I plugged it into the computer, it installed something. But the version it installed had a GUI and I could see the others on the feed. Rose, June, and Dave. At least we're all in the same building. It'll make it easier to do what we need to.

I can hear the impacts starting outside. I can hear the sound of that shadow thing coming closer.

My mind doesn't want this to be true, but how could I ignore what's right in front of me?

>say "The others are trying to reach the Ziggurat! It's dang near twenty miles away."

Dirk frowns, deeply.

"Is Jake there with you?"

>say "Yeah, he's still here. I think I see the gate they were talking about, but it's past that shadow creature thing."

"Roxy says hers is way up high on top of the damn - I'm helping build her a way up now."

>say "Where's yours?"

Dirk looks out the window.

"In the middle of the goddamn air."

>say "I'll help you out."

>place object getportallocation()-(0,0,5)

Please select your object type:

1. Sphere

2. Cube

3. Flat plain

4. Stairs

5. Custom

>object(4)

>say "I'm gonna build a path over, just give me a minute!"

Dirk nods and runs to grab some items he needs from his room, including his trusty katana. He dashes back to the computer.

"Once I'm through that gate, y'all better book it. Roxy's going through hers in a minute. You two are the last before we're all through."

>say "Let me know when Roxy's through, okay?"



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PROJECT SUNGLASS

4/13/1999

All of this has happened before — in another place and another time. I was never involved in Project Redglare, but the implications about multi universes and timelines were rumors I heard. I read the documents.

I knew the theory was sound.

Now it's all coming together. Dave and June are through their gates and it's only down to Rose and I. I have no idea what's going to happen next.

The meteors are getting more frequent — I'm sure there's a big one coming. All the brass are probably hunkered down in their holes already, waiting for the end. Maybe it'll come. Maybe not. Doesn't matter to me.

Just in case, I found one of the lock-boxes and I'll put it in our server room before we go. It's secure, but they just left it.

Funny how the end of the world changes your priorities.

"Roxy's through, Jane. Whatever those gates are - wherever they lead... she's headed there."

>say "Good. There was another big meteor strike. That thing is just kinda... sitting there. It's like it knows that I need to reach the gate."

Dirk looks out the window again, at the slipshod bridge of constructed objects hanging eerily in mid-air. He nods.

>say "Is there anything else you can do to help?"

Dirk shakes his head.

"I tried to dig out trenches as far along as I could - the interface seems to have limits on how far out it can go. You'll have to run that last bit."

>say "Well... shoot."

"Couldn't have said it better myself."

>say "Dirk, take care of yourself, okay?"

"Yeah. Take care of yourself too. And Jake - take care of Jake."

>say "You know it."

"I guess this is it, Janey. See you on the other side."

Dirk leaps out the window and runs down the line of suspended objects, expertly keeping his footing as he goes. He is wearing a backpack now, packed with everything he thought he could use. The instructions of the game are vague about what happens when you cross your gate, other than that the standard client/server interface will no longer apply. This is by design, as S'Burb(SM) is a comprehensive multi-layered experience designed to engage with its users on a number of levels.

As he nears the gate, Dirk glances over to see a large meteorite streaking in low along the horizon. It's going to impact downtown Houston. The death toll will be immense.

Dirk wishes he could've done something - anything - to stop this. But somehow it feels predestined.

He reaches the gate and stops for a moment, looking around as if to find where Jane is watching from - not understanding, perhaps, how his actions are being relayed through the S'Burb(SM) interface.

He nods one final time in his world... and crosses the threshold to another.

---- USER DIRK STRIDER HAS LOGGED OFF ----



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PROJECT SUNGLASS

April 13th, 1999

If you are reading this, I'm sorry. The world we left you has been devastated in the aftermath of the game. Or maybe you're like me and you're reading this from another time - another place - another world.

Maybe there's still time for you to stop the same thing from happening.

But I know one thing - if you're reading this, then it's not too late. Even if the world has been left to lie in ruin, it's still not too late. You can pick up the remains. You can mend the broken and heal those left in its wake.

No matter what, remember one thing:

You can make a better world.

-Jade Harley

Dr. Jane Crocker, PhD

April 13th, 1989

Dirk and Roxy are through their gates. Now there's only Jake and I to go. After that... who knows exactly what happens next.

The help files mentioned a couple vague things but none of it really makes much sense - something about consorts and lands and ascending to God Tier. Whatever that means? I don't know - I'll find out, I guess.

I'm leaving this with everything else and I'm not sure what'll happen to it. I'm not sure what'll happen to this world. And maybe that's for the best.

We let the Empire in because we'd lost hope of humanity ever doing better. We didn't put up a fight because at the end of the day we thought it'd be better to let ourselves live under the rule of an alien power than to try to stand up and determine our own fate as a species.

I've been ignoring so much out there that didn't feel right. So many things that I knew weren't the way they were supposed to be. But it's so easy to fall into the trap of living - Janey gets through every day the same as every other day, right?

Jake and I are going through that gate. Whatever that shadow thing is, we're not letting it stop us. We're going through the gate, and whatever happens next happens.

If you're reading this, I'm sorry. We never meant to leave this to you, but we're going to do everything we can to fix it.

This is it.

I'm pretty sure the others are dead - I don't know, but even if they get to the Ziggurat, it won't matter.

We're going to make a run for the gate. Dirk did what he could to set things up so we could make it.

The rest is up to us.

Take care of each other - in the end, it's all you've got.

-Jane Crocker



DEPARTMENT OF THE ALTERNIAN FLEET PROJECT LIGHTBRINGER

13th day-cycle of the 4th Bilunar Perigee, HIC2545

Enclosed is the artifact that was located at [REDACTED] on Planet [REDACTED], orbiting a yellow star known as [REDACTED].

Artifact was located by a survey team at approximately [REDACTED] at the beginning of the local day-cycle. It was located in a sealed metal container within a large metal vault inside of a ruined structure of some kind. It is unclear from the ruins what the function of this building was, but it has been suggested by my fellow archaeological specialists that it may have been a military structure of some kind.

The planet is currently uninhabited by any form of intelligent life, and local plant and animal life is extremely stunted. There is evidence of a large-scale meteorite bombardment approximately 20-50 sweeps ago which was clearly responsible for the destruction of most life on the planet.

All contents are being forwarded to Commander Maryam for translation and analysis. Additionally, there is some surviving technology that was found in proximity to the artifact that will be forwarded to Specialist Captor to attempt repairs.

Additional questions can be forwarded to my office.

Glory to Her Imperious Condescension. Glory to the Alternian Empire.

-Specialist Aradia Megido
Archaeologist, Project Lightbringer

